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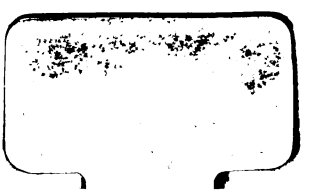

BAPTIZED WITH A CURSE.

VOL. II.

BAPTIZED WITH A CURSE.

A Novel.

BY

EDITH STEWART DREWRY.

'And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse.'—*Manfred.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

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BAPTIZED WITH A CURSE.

CHAPTER I.

IL ANGELO'S ONLY FRIEND.

A TALL man in a felt hat came swinging along the broad pavement of —— Square, and stopping at one of the handsome houses, knocked—a short, steady, determined knock that commanded attention. It was characteristic of the man, and he got instant attention, as he generally did. Guy de Cavagnac was not one to be easily gainsaid.

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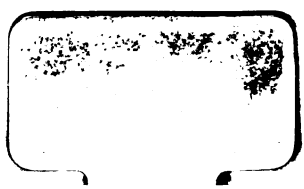

BAPTIZED WITH A CURSE.

VOL. II.

dream, too bright to last. Fourteen years is long to mourn.'

The Italian lifted his face, and his dark eyes were full of remorseful tears.

'Oh, Stewart, Stewart, forgive me! I have come back to you at last, weary, weary; absence became intolerable. Many a time I have been near you, ay, near enough to touch you, but I dared not come back. I should not now, save that something stronger than myself impelled me to return—an impulse that possessed me, heart and soul, from the moment I heard that child speak of you and call you by the old familiar name I had given you in your boyhood, because your name was strange to my southern tongue. I could not bear it. I knew then that I must see

you. O Angelo, can you forgive me?'

'I can only feel that it is Guido's hand I hold,' said the sculptor gently. 'Amico mio, it should have been before; I could not harm *you*.'

The Italian looked into the deep grey eyes, and shook his head with that anxious, sorrowful smile of his.

'No, Stewart; but I might harm you.'

'You? Impossible.'

'Not willingly, God knows; I would die first!' said Guido almost passionately; 'but there are things over which man has no power.'

'Tell me how you could harm me, old friend.'

'God forbid!' said Cavagnac, almost recoiling. 'Ask me nothing, Angelo; it

is enough that the dread of it has kept me away all these years.'

'It must do so no more, Guido.'

'No more; neither of us could bear it a second time.'

There was a silence, which the sculptor at last broke.

'Then you escaped the banditti?'

'Sì, after three months' horrible captivity.'

'In all these long fourteen years where have you been? what have you done?'

'Where have I not been? what have I not done?' answered the other wearily. 'I have been in perils by sea, in perils by land, struggling often for bare life. I have been in the secret police of Paris, and can always fall back upon it, for the detective

instinct is strong in me, and I was their right hand. I have served the Carbonari in my own land, and Hungarian conspirators against the hated Austrians. It was nothing to me that it was useless, impolitic, sure of failure. I was employed to do certain work, and I did it. In the end, by a hair's breadth, I saved myself and the papers which would have sent the half of them to the scaffold. I have served Carlists in Spain, and, thanks to the stupidity of one of them, I was never nearer losing my head. I was taken, tried, and, though they had no proofs against me, and could not wring a word from me, I was condemned to death. I could say too truly, "Save me from my friends, and I will take care of my enemies;" but, like

you, I am, and have been for many years, a freemason, and, thanks to that fact, I succeeded in making my escape the very night before my execution. I have faced death a hundred times, and as near as that, but I never stood a better chance of being beheaded. Not that I care,' he said with a quiet, dare-devil recklessness very characteristic of the man. 'It is my trade to cast my life on the hazard and play it against death.'

'A losing game in the long run. Now listen, Guido, and answer truly. Are you in want of money at present?'

'If I was, caro mio, I should not be here now.'

'Guido, Guido, for shame; you are evading—'

'No, per Bacco, it is truth. I am a rolling stone that has gathered some moss. Besides, I am here at present in a detective character, secretly, of course.'

'Who are you seeking? if I may ask; you know you are safe with me.'

'As the grave. I am tracking a man, a regular *republicain rouge*, whom twelve years ago I hunted down in England and arrested here for forgery, which was only part of his offence. He was sent to the *bagno*, but three years after he escaped.'

'Could not you find him at all?'

'They could not, and I personally never tried, for I had left their service, and was far enough away from la belle France. I think his existence was almost

forgotten, till just lately we had information that he was, or will soon be, in London, hatching a gigantic conspiracy against the French government; and here am I really to watch, get proofs, and unearth ce beau Monsieur la, and his precious schemes.'

'Do you think you shall succeed?'

'If I do not they may send me to the bagno instead of him,' said the detective coolly.

'And what are you ostensibly?' asked the sculptor, smiling at the answer.

Guido shrugged his shoulders. 'I am M. le Comte de Cavagnac, an Italian refugee, if they will, bearing a French title; comprenez vous?'

'Oui, M. le Comte; but to me you are always Guido.'

'Ay, Angelo, always Guido di Schiara to you.'

He paused, and then said in another tone, 'Luigi knew me, so tell him that I have reasons for bearing another name. But your uncle—can you trust him?'

'As myself. He must know that the Count de Cavagnac is my only friend, Guido di Schiara.'

'Eh bien, your wish is mine, amico mio.' And the gentle smile that was the shadow of the sculptor's lightened the bronzed careworn face. 'I never could gainsay Il Angelo.'

'I will fetch the old man, then,' said Claverhouse, as he left the room.

The Italian rose and looked in the

large mirror over the mantelpiece, then turned hurriedly from it.

'Another trial,' he muttered. 'G ran' Dio, if—'

The door opened, and Stewart came in again with Dr John.

'My uncle, Dr Fantony; M. le Comte de Cavagnac,' said Claverhouse. 'That is in public; between us, privately, he is a man who was lost and is found again, whom for fourteen years I have mourned as dead, my old and only friend, Guido di Schiara.'

The old man held out his hand. 'Whom my boy loves is my friend,' he said, with his grandly simple sincerity; and Guido Schiara bent, in deep and silent reverence, over that hand.

'Have you been long in England, Count?' the Doctor added.

'No, Monsieur; I came to London a few days ago.'

Dr John started as the voice struck his ear, and gave a quick earnest glance from the Italian to the sculptor, but he only remarked,

'You are the second old friend Stewart has come across lately.'

'Am I?' He glanced at Claverhouse and smiled. 'Have I a rival, then, Angelo?'

The sculptor shook his head.

'No; that is only façon de parler, an acquaintance, schoolfellow, no more. Casper Von Wolfgang is no *friend* of mine.'

'*Him?* no, impossible.'

'Comment! you know him?'

Cavagnac laughed.

'A great deal better than he knows me. I first met him twelve years ago. I met him again in the train from Dover.'

'Tel us the whole story, Guido,' said Stewart; 'it is amusing, for you have that old *méchant* laugh in your eyes, so let us hear it.'

So Cavagnac told the story of his odd acquaintance with Wolfgang, with a quiet humour, under which lay a deep vein of sarcasm, that could be stingingly bitter and keen, a terrible weapon when its possessor chose to use it.

Dr John said, with a little amused smile, 'I fear, Count, that my former

pupil has not prepossessed you in his favour.'

'Dr Fantony, I will answer you frankly. I know young Wolfgang too slightly to judge him entirely. He is passionate, impetuous, jealous-tempered, and conceited. He has, no doubt, much good and many fine points; but whatever they may be, there is in him some vein that is in strong antagonism to my being. I feel towards him that intense unaccountable distrust, in which I have never yet been mistaken, and, mark my words, he will justify it some day.'

'God forbid!' said the old man emphatically; 'yet,' he added, 'Stewart has felt the same antagonism, and—but let it

pass now. Stewart, let us adjourn to your studio.'

'If you wish it.'

And the sculptor led the way.

MANUSCRIPT XIII.

THE SCULPTOR'S STUDIO, AND HOW IL ANGELO REDEEMED HIS PROMISE.

I HAVE set myself a task, and I must accomplish it, but it is torture. I shrink from it, from what, in its accomplishment, must come with miserable horror; looking back it is like an awful dream. Dante said that he found his 'Inferno' in the world around him. I have found mine within me. But enough; let me go on.

It was a bright day when I took my

mother and Nina to —— Square, to visit the great sculptor's studio.

We were shown, of course, to a most elegant drawing-room, where we had not long to wait, when the door opened, admitting a fine-looking Italian, over thirty years, whom I guessed to be the confidential servant mentioned by the Doctor. He begged us to follow him to the studio, where the Signor would be happy to see us; and he led the way up a wide staircase, along a gallery, and into an anteroom. Here our guide threw open a noiseless door, drew back a crimson velvet curtain, and ushered us into the studio itself.

There were three people in it, Claverhouse and Dr John, who immediately rose

to receive us; and,—yes,—that man again, the strange Italian, whom I now met for the fourth time under a name he had coolly admitted was not his own. I bowed, and Stewart introduced him to Georgine and Nina as 'the Count de Cavagnac, an old friend of his own.'

But let me pause.

Do you know that peculiar hushed stillness of a sculpture-room, that makes it seem like sacrilege to speak above a whisper? so calm and still, so grandly lifeless the marble, that in its presence life is hushed, as in the presence of something holy—the holiness of Art.

Shall I ever forget Nina's face, as she stood in the centre of the room, drinking in the beauty round her, her hands locked,

her lips half open, wrapt, entranced. I glanced round, and saw the sculptor quietly watching her. The next moment I shivered, for, as I withdrew my eyes, I caught the keen, distrustful gaze of that dark, guileful Italian fixed on me, and my old hatred and fear of the man swept over me with tenfold force. I turned my attention resolutely to the sculpture and the room. It was lighted from above, and hung with crimson velvet, which threw the statuary out in strong relief, and made its whiteness almost dazzling. At one side was a cabinet grand piano in a handsome mahogany case, and beside it was spread a magnificent leopard skin, in which lay a gigantic black Newfoundland dog, with his large observant eye watching us all,

though he never moved, for I saw Stewart lift his finger to him.

How shall I describe the works of art, each one of which was a laurel on his brow; many strange and fanciful in idea, but each so lovely in conception, so perfect in execution! How time passed I know not, but I found myself at last standing with Nina before a group, not small,—for no figure was under four feet high,—but the gem of all, the pearl of greatest price. It might have been called 'A wreck,' literally and allegorically.

On a rough rocky shore lay a broken mast or spar, with a piece of torn rope still fastened to it, and near it on one side, as if flung there by the wild sea, lay the corpse of a beautiful woman, clasping with

her right arm her dead child, whose delicate little form the pitiless waves had left almost nude. Exquisite was the contrast of those two faces; the peaceful, holy calm of the child's, the agony and wild terror on the mother's locked dead face, the look it had worn in her fearful struggle for life.

There were yet two other figures, the corpse of a man in the very prime of his manhood and noble beauty, drowned in saving the woman he loved, the slender, nervous hands locked about her slight form with a force that had made every muscle stand out, and the fine head thrown back, resting against her with a half-smile still on his lips, the smile with which, perhaps, he had looked up in her face and

died; and she, that young fragile girl! I felt myself start and flush painfully, for she had Nina's face and beauty, but with such a look as hers must surely never wear; half-crouching by, half-clinging to the dead, one small hand putting back the hair from the calm brow, the other pressed on the silent heart, seeking in vain for one throb of the life that is stilled for ever. There was passionate agony in the action, in every line of the figure, and in that beautiful face such hopeless, aweful despair as few ever witness; the marble had life, the terrible life of a broken heart.

Was that all? No, the master mind and hand had put the last perfect touch which made the grand work faultless. There was yet another mourner, a New-

foundland dog, standing half in his mistress's disordered robe, with one paw laid on his dead master's breast, and his face lifted to the girl's with such a human look of sympathy, grief, and wistful appeal as we see perhaps only in a faithful dog.

How long I stood before that wonderful picture-sculpture I know not, but when at last I turned it was to glance at Nina. Did she see the likeness? I could not tell. Her face wore the same rapt expression, though now her dark eyes were suffused with tears.

My mother's voice behind her addressing the sculptor jarred on her ear, and brought her abruptly back from the dream-world of Art.

'The work is perfect, but what gave you the model for this mourner?'

'Only memory, Madame,' answered Stewart's quiet soft voice.

I turned irresistibly, and glanced at him. Had I been mistaken? if he had remembered her so well, could he have forgotten that promise, simple trifle as it seemed? In that moment I cursed him—cursed the hour we two had ever met. I do so now, for in that hour a devil had entered into my soul.

My mother remarked, 'The original of this noble dog I see on that leopard's skin; what is his name?'

'Fidelio, Madame; a name he earned.' As he spoke he rose, and came up to the group we formed, and hearing his name

the dog came to him, pushing his nose into his master's hand.

Nina knelt down to caress him, and was affectionately received, for Fidelio put his great paw on her arm, and licked her face. My mother laughed.

'That child is always making friends with dogs. I tell her she will get bitten or hurt some day.'

Stewart looked down on the girl and dog, and answered with that beautiful smile I had never hated till now,—

'No dog will ever harm the Signora; they know by instinct those who love them.'

'Just what I say,' said I, bending to stroke the noble animal. To my surprise and annoyance he raised his head, looked

fixedly in my face, then in his master's, and whined uneasily; but on my again offering to touch him he uttered a low, deep growl, though he was silent the moment Stewart raised his reproving finger. I glanced nervously towards Cavagnac. I could not help it, nor the shudder which ran through me, when for the second time I met his deep fell gaze.

'Claverhouse, you should whip that animal for his ill-manners,' said I, with what I meant for an easy laugh.

'I never whip Fidelio,' he answered gravely.

'Why not, in wonder's name?'

'Because, Casper, five years ago I was shipwrecked on the American coast, and

he saved my life. How could I strike him after that?'

I lifted my hand to cover a sneer, but Nina said warmly, 'Of course not! You could not be guilty of such shameful ingratitude!'

My mother asked in her suave, somewhat silky manner,

'Then, Mr Claverhouse, this sad story here has truth for its foundation?'

'Oui, Madame.'

'And, if I may ask, for what great Art gallery is this extraordinary sculpture destined?'

'For none.'

'What! none? What is the Art world about to let it stay here, Signor Maestro?'

'Nay, you and my friend Cavagnac

are the only people, beside my uncle, who know of its existence.'

'I am astonished. Was it not, then, executed for any one?'

The sculptor smiled.

'Yes, Madame; for a lady.'

'How I envy her! Do tell me who she is. Some foreigner of rank, for only a Pitti Palace ought to receive *that*.'

'She is only an English lady, Madame Von Wolfgang, to whom, when I was a boy and she a little child, I gave a promise, which I hope she will consider I have redeemed'—he turned to Nina, bending low—'in begging her to do me the honour to accept this sculpture.'

My soul seemed on fire, and something within me—all, perhaps, that was good—

seemed to stand still, and then snap asunder for ever. I can see even now Nina's face of wonder, and hear her half-hurried words—

'For me? I was only a child—and you have remembered such a trifle so long?'

'Not a trifle, Miss Lennox. I had passed my word, and I have only redeemed the pledge given.'

Redeemed it! Yes, nobly indeed, as I might have known he would. The gift was like himself, splendidly graceful. Nina had no words, but her thanks had a far deeper language than all my mother's profuse expressions; for Nina simply held out her little hand with a tremulous smile, and in silence the great sculptor bent over

it, slightly touching it with his lips in his graceful foreign fashion.

Then he turned to Georgine.

'I will have the sculpture removed to Madame's house to-morrow, if that pleases her.'

'Nay; when you please, Mr Claverhouse,' answered Georgine, rising, to my great relief; 'we are ready to receive it.'

'Grazie, to-morrow, then,' and he touched the bell. The same attendant, Luigi, came in, and Stewart said,

'Luigi, will you cover that group again, and to-morrow let it be removed to Monsieur Von Wolfgang's house? You know where it is?'

'Signor, sì.'

Luigi threw over the group a large veil of fine Indian silk, and retired.

'A handsome fellow that,' said I. 'If I may ask, Stewart, what rank in your house does he hold, for he looks far above a servant?'

'He is not a servant. Luigi Padello is my friend and companion. He is everything—attendant, courier, and foreman of my workmen, for he was bred a mason. Luigi is, in fine, my right hand. I could not do without him.'

'You give him a high character,' said I, laughing. 'I shall steal him from you.'

'Beyond your power, Casper; beyond even that of Cavagnac there, who is Luigi's second love,' he answered, and then exchanging adieux, we took our leave.

Nina was very quiet during the drive, but my mother would turn into the Park, and could talk of nothing else but Claverhouse, Dr Fantony, the wonders of the studio, and that Italian.

'Pray walk the ponies, Casper,' she said, 'and tell me who he is. Is Cavagnac his name?'

And I must endure it, while I felt internally on fire.

'No, of course not, mother; he is an Italian—probably a refugee.'

I fancied I saw Nina shake her head to herself doubtfully, but before I could speak, a very different thing and voice close to the phaeton made me start and pull up.

'Ah, Monsieur, bon jour! il y a long-

temps que je ne vous ai vu! je vous salue et les dames aussi.'

'Anna de Provence!' I exclaimed, 'and in London.'

'The original of the famous "Fiora di Maria, n'est ce pas?"' said Nina, leaning forwards.

'Oui, Mademoiselle; I sat for it.'

'And have you got a statuette of it? Let me look. Let me see what you have. Casper, give me your purse; I've forgotten mine, and— Ah, look there!' She pointed suddenly with her hand, and I turned to see a fine Calabrian wolf-hound bound to Anna's side. 'What a beauty! Is it yours?'

'Sì, Signora.'

'You did not have him that day at the

Colosseum, Anna-Marie,' said I, touching the dog.

The hound growled slightly; and though Anna instantly bade him 'Silence! Corsare,' I saw her face change, and she gave me a quick, keen, I thought distrustful, look; but the next second the mobile southern face was smiling again as she answered me,

'He was not far off that day, Monsieur —within my call.'

'And what do you think of London, Fleur-de-Marie?'

'It is a great city, Monsieur; grand, large, but not beautiful.'

'It is very busy, though, Anna—full of life.'

'Signor, sì; of life,—and solitude.'

One of her quiet, sad answers. I said, after a pause,

'Do you know that your friend, Il gran' Maestro, is in London?'

'I have seen him, Monsieur, merci.'

'Eh bien! Mother, have you chosen?—and Nina?'

They had selected two statuettes, and three elegant Roman cameos, real ones, for which Nina gave all the loose gold in my purse, despite Anna's assurance that 'the statuettes were only a bagatelle, quatre francs, and les camei were only sept livres.' Nina only smiled, and kissed her hand mischievously as I drove on with a 'Bon voyage, Anna.'

When I looked back again the Provençale and her dog were gone.

CHAPTER II.

HOW CAVAGNAC EMPLOYED ANNA DE LAVAL.

Casper Von Wolfgang had not misread Anna de Laval's look when her dog, as Stewart's had done, received his caress with a growl, and Corsare's nature was so friendly and gentle save when his mistress was molested, that from him a growl in return for a caress was an event, and the child stood there long, pondering and thinking.

'Corsare, mon camarade,' she said at last, shaking her beautiful head, 'tu as raison.'

'Ma chère enfant, à quoi pensez-vous?' said a soft voice, and a hand was laid lightly on her shoulder. 'You are lost in dreams; that will never make your fortune, pretty one.'

The cameo-seller looked up in Cavagnac's handsome face, and said with a quiet desolation that touched him to the quick,

'I wish I was dead,—s'il plait à Dieu.'

'Anna, my child, you pain me deeply; that is no wish for fifteen years.'

'N'est ce pas, Monsieur? but I am alone in the world.'

'So am I, Anna. I have tossed about

for more than twenty years since I was a lad. I have lost all, but I have seldom, if ever, felt a wish to die.'

'Ah, but Monsieur is a man, strong, and able to battle with the world, to rise above fate and adversity, moi, je ne suis qu'une fille,' said the child with a deep, sad pathos, of which she was evidently unconscious.

Something in the plaintive voice thrilled through Guido Schiara as it had never done before; and as he looked down on the delicate patrician face and form he shuddered to think of the utter friendlessness of this girl, whose refined training and extreme beauty were perhaps her worst enemies. He turned from her and paced to and fro for a few minutes, but

catching her wistful, troubled glance, he stopped again.

'The Signor Angelo is your friend, mon enfant?'

The cameo-seller shook her head.

'He is generous, noble, my life is at his feet; but how can the cameo-seller dare to call the great sculptor her friend? the distance between them is too great.'

'Yet he is your friend. If you were in trouble, Anna, you know that he would wish you to come to him.'

'Monsieur, he has done so much for me already, that I could not trouble him with my sorrows.'

'My child, I understand and honour your feelings, but you know him too well

not to know that nothing would pain him more than to hear you say that.'

The Provençale's head drooped, and her dark eyes filled, but she only answered, 'I cannot help it, Monsieur; he shall not hear me say it.'

'Yet he will know it, Anna; words are not always needed. Has he never before now drawn from you more than you meant?'

'Often, but I never care then. What the Signor does must be right,' said the child innocently.

'Oh, woman, woman,' murmured Cavagnac, 'when wilt thou cease to worship?' But aloud he said, 'He is perfect, then, in your eyes, Anna. Il Angelo in very truth.'

'Sì; to me he is, because whatever his faults, I have never seen them.'

'By the holy Madonna! nor have I,' said Guido Schiara, strongly. 'Yet even he has enemies,—who has not? and the great and famous more than any.'

'Monsieur, it is the tax which the great pay to le diable.'

'C'est ça.'

Once more he paced to and fro, but when he again stopped, his question was of another kind.

'Fleur-de-Marie, who was that you were speaking to before I came up,—the man in the phaeton?'

'I do not know who he is, Monsieur. I met him first at Rome. He is a Tedesco, and more than half an atheist,' and the

Provençale shrugged her shoulders with an expression half of pity, half of contempt. Cavagnac laughed.

'He is somewhat handsome, n'est ce pas?—half German, half Creole-looking.'

'Monsieur knows him?'

'Yes; shall I tell you his name, Anna?'

'S'il vous plait.'

'It is,—remember it well, Anna,—Casper St Leger Von Wolfgang.'

'I shall not forget it; mais, Monsieur.'

'Eh bien, mon enfant.'

'Why am I to remember his name so well?'

'Because,' said Guido Schiara, with a sudden bright gleam in his dark eyes that would have made Casper shrink, 'be-

cause, Anna de Laval, he is Il Angelo's enemy.'

'Madre di Dio! then I am his to the death!' said the Provençale energetically.

'Give me your hand on that, Anna,' said Cavagnac.

She gave it him, and the touch of that little soft hand as it lay in his strong grasp, thrilled through the man as her voice had done only a short while before.

He held it a minute, and then dropping it, said,

'Now, listen, Anna-Marie; for if you are willing to do it, I have employment for you that could only be done by such a close, faithful, keen person as you are. In your wandering life have you ever served any secret society or police?'

'Oui, Monsieur, the first in Rome, the second several times.'

'Per Bacco! fallen on my feet again! I am at present engaged by the secret police of Paris to hunt out and watch a man who is believed to be in London hatching a murderous conspiracy; a woman—a girl like you—is a valuable assistant, and any information you bring me shall bear your own price. What say you?'

'Je suis à vos ordres, M. de Cavagnac. Who is the man, and what is he like?'

'What disguise he may wear I do not know, but his real name is Louis Bonheur, and his real identity this—'

He took out a pocket-book, and drew from it a very finely-executed miniature

of a Frenchman about forty years of age, with a rather good-looking, but somewhat forbidding countenance.

Anna de Laval gazed long on it, studying every feature and line.

'I shall know M. Bonheur anywhere,' she said, as she at last gave it back; 'but he looks no fool.'

'If he was I should have no trouble, as it is I have; but I hunted him down twelve years ago, and I shall do so again. I have never yet failed in anything I undertook—in the detective line, I mean. Now I must go, so adieu, mon enfant, and remember, after Il Angelo, to give the first place in your friendship to Guy de Cavagnac. No—I will trust you—give it to Guido di Schiara.'

'Signor, sì. I could never forget the man who has trusted the wanderer.' And touching her lips to his hand, she turned away.

There were heavy tears in the Italian's dark eyes as he, too, went his solitary way.

No doubt of her faith ever crossed him. Suspicious, distrustful as he was, the thought never entered his mind that this cameo-seller might play him false. He knew too well the nature he had trusted.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRANGER WHO BOUGHT A STATUETTE.

ANNA DE LAVAL wandered on, offering her graceful wares to the passers-by, but her plaintive 'Achetez une image, Madame, —à bon marché,' only obtained mostly a negative in one form or another, a shake of the head, a 'No, thank you,' and not unfrequently a rough refusal, or harsh 'I don't give to beggars or tramps;' and one finely-dressed dame said condescendingly, 'It is a pity such a nice-looking girl as

you don't follow some respectable trade; you ought to be ashamed of such a vagrant life.' The proud blood of a long line of knights flushed to their descendant's fine face, and she answered with haughty bitterness, 'To learn a trade costs money, and I was not born or bred to it.'

No, poor child; the worse for her.

Somewhere about dusk she turned, wearily enough, into one of the West-end squares, before one of the houses of which an Italian organ man had just struck up the graceful 'Fiancé's Waltz.' There were children and a lady at the window, and the Provençale, pausing, held up a statuette. But the lady shook her head, and at the same time opening the window, she threw

out some pence to the man, bidding him 'not stop.'

The coins fell near the cameo-seller; she picked them up and gave them to the young man, whose bright, dark eyes rested in surprised admiration on her as he received the money.

'Oh, I am very much obliged to you,' he said as he slung his organ, and lifted his hat with a courtly wave to the lady.

'A salute is more than she deserves,' said Anna indignantly, and in French. 'Men are not dogs, to throw things at like that!'

The man stared for a second, and then laughed, half amused, half bitterly, 'Il faut aller au diable, *ces* sentiments là, or

we might starve,—n'est ce pas, camarade? are you going my way?'

'As well as another,—yes.'

'Ces Anglais despise us,' resumed the man as they moved on. 'They call us—I've heard them—idle fellows, and say, "Why don't those lazy organ-grinders stay at home or work at trades?"—bah, on me fait rire! we cannot stop at home to starve, we are too poor to learn trades;—que faire donc?' shrugging his shoulders. 'Take me, now; I am from Parma,—do you know Parma?'

The cameo-seller nodded.

'Eh bien; there was no work to live by there, and my parents, the Madonna rest their souls! were too poor to apprentice me to any trade or craft, and one must live,

so here I am. Et je vous dis,' said he energetically, 'it is hard work carrying this organ, parbleu; harder than ces gens là would believe! and, hot or cold, early and late, in rain or snow, we must be out all the same, often wet, cold, hungry—'

'And shelterless,' added the Provençale.

'C'est vrai;—you know that, too?'

'Ay,' said the child quietly, 'too well. My trade is very uncertain. The first night I was in London I slept on a doorstep, with Corsare here for a pillow.'

'Il est un beau chien: a portico is all the shelter I expect to get to-night,' he added with a half laugh that ended in a sigh. 'I have had bad luck to-day, et je

n'ai pas d'argent; what these Inglesi call hard up!'

The Provençale quietly drew forth some silver, and putting it into his hand said in her gentle way, 'Take it, camarado mio; the Madonna sent me luck to-day, and I have more than enough for both.'

'Eh, per Bacco!' said the astonished Parmese, offering to put it back, 'keep it all, fanciulla, for you will need it. I am a man; it won't be the first or last time I have slept out.'

'Nay, then, less reason to do so now.'

'Mais—'

'Basta, basta; we are compatriotes,' said Anna-Marie, adding, half laughingly, 'I will come to you when I am hard up, if you tell me your name.'

'I wish you would. My name is Giovan' Tofanni; and yours?'

'Anna-Marie.'

The young man glanced at her, and said, 'It is the name, then, of a friend. Have you ever sat to artists?'

'More than thirty times,' answered the cameo-seller. 'Why do you stop? Is this one of your houses where you play?' For Giovan' had stopped and unslung his organ.

'Yes, I get twopence here always,' he answered, and began playing, while Anna leaned against the area railings, waiting till he went on again. It was a quiet street, with little traffic, so that an approaching step made the child look up, just as a man approached. Something

indescribable about him told the foreigner, for nothing of him was visible save a large loose overcoat, with a high collar turned up, a thick brown beard, and a broad-brimmed American-looking hat, worn very low. He glanced at the man, at the Roman cameo-seller, and the statuettes on her box,—and stopped.

'Je ne sais pas qui est la plus belle,' he said; 'quel prix demandez vous pour cette image?'

'Six sous,' said the Provençale, shortly and without moving, for the tone and manner did not please her.

'Hein,' said he, laying the coin on the box, and taking up the statuette; 'you don't know, of course, what this is meant for?'

'Probably Monsieur does not; it is Il gran' Maestro's famous Madonna.'

The man wrapped his loose coat about him, and walked swiftly away, just as a servant came out, and gave Giovan' two-pence; then a few more tunes, and the two wanderers once more moved on, still in company, for, despite the great difference between them, they had much in common; both were strangers, both homeless and friendless in a foreign land.

'Have you been long in England?' the man asked.

'No, not long; have you?'

'What me? yes; some years on and off,' he answered, giving his organ a hoist, and passing his hand under the strap which crossed his chest.

'That is painful, that strap,' said the child. 'It cuts the chest.'

'Yes; so I hold it off like this; and the organ is heavy, even when one is used to it.'

'It is not your own, of course?'

'Yes, it is; and hard work and long time it took to pay in for it; but you see I did it at last. It isn't as good as I would have liked, but I could not scrape up more.'

'How much was it, then?'

'One-and-twenty pounds; it is one of Cavioli et Corvi. You see,' said Giovan', with a frank laugh, 'if la Sainte Vierge had been pleased to make me un beau garçon, I could have been a "model" as well, mais elle ne m'a pas donné la

beauté, so I could not get money that way. Are those things'—touching her box—'your own?'

'Yes, all of them; some are real *camei*, which I brought from Rome and Florence.'

'E perchè!' exclaimed Giovan', opening his bright eyes wide; 'how did you manage that?'

'By sitting for a model,' said Anna, with a mental reservation, which, though speaking the strict truth, kept to herself the real fact that the cameos were the sculptor's parting gift. 'I sold some to-day to a bella Signora, and a few I have sold in the shops—to jewellers.'

'How do you get them to believe they are real? pour vos beaux yeux, eh?'

'No; they can see for themselves, just

as Cavioli or Corvi can tell a good organ from a bad. Why do you stop?'

'Because I must go down this street; and you?'

'I must go straight on. I shall not stop out late to-night.'

'Good-night, then, camarade; we may meet again, perhaps.'

'It is very likely; I hope we shall,' she answered. 'Au revoir, Giovan'.'

And the two wanderers parted; each went a different way, but that night, when the poor organ-player lay down to rest beneath the shelter of a roof, a fervent blessing on the child went up to Heaven, that surely descended on her head.

It was somewhere near eight o'clock

when the cameo-seller returned to her humble room, to share her simple supper with her faithful friend Corsare. Even if it was only a cup of water and crust of bread, he had his half; sometimes it was not even that, but it was very rarely that Corsare went without food, for many were the times that his mistress, utterly penniless, scorning to beg a penny for herself, had paused at a butcher's open shop, and offered her prettiest statuette for a handful of bones for her dog, and she had never yet been refused. 'La Sainte Vierge a toujours un soin pour les malheureux, mon chien,' she would say, in the gentle way which Corsare perfectly understood and appreciated.

But to-night there was supper for both,

and Corsare would pause in the crunching of a fine juicy bone to look up affectionately in his mistress's face, as if glad that she was eating too. He was still at her feet, crunching busily, when the landlady appeared at the door holding out a letter.

'This come awhile back, miss,' for so the woman instinctively called her patrician lodger; 'leastways, it can't mean no one else. A furrin chap brought it, and says he, "Is Madmerzel Anna in yet?" "No," says I, "she ain't. Did you want her very pertikler?" says I. So then he gave me this.'

'Merci bien, Madame; it is for me.'

''Tain't often as my lodgers gets letters now,' said the woman, curiously.

'Eh, why not?' asked the Provençale, amused.

''Cause, my dear, they's poor and got no friends. No more ain't you, I 'spose?'

'No, none. I am a foreigner and a stranger here.'

'Maybe you've friends at home in furrin parts?'

'I have no home, Madame.'

'There's heaps like that, anyway,' said the woman sighing; 'and a roof over one's head ain't always a home. Wish I hadn't never married away from *my* home, I do often,' said she as she went away.

Anna-Marie opened the letter, which was in Italian, but she knew the bold yet delicate hand for that of the sculptor. It was only a few lines.

'To-morrow morning, Anna, go about eleven to No. 12, —— street, and ask for Miss Lennox, the lady who was with M. Von Wolfgang to-day and bought of you. She wants you to sit to her for a drawing. Go in your Roman dress, and take Corsare.

'Your friend,

'ANGELO.'

'Corsare mio, we are going to sit to a bella signora,' said the child, 'so we will sleep now, amico.'

MANUSCRIPT XIV.

ARTIST, MODEL, AND SPECTATOR.

I was enjoying a smoke and the last new novel in my own study, the next morning, when in walked Miss Nina and perched herself on the arm of a huge easy-chair.

'Puff, puff,' said she saucily; 'what clouds you do throw off. I wonder why men must smoke. I shall take to it, to keep you company.'

'Try,' said I, offering her a box of choice Habanas.

'Not yet, Monsieur. Put down that silly book, you bad boy, and attend to me.' And her little slender hand drew it away.

'You impudent child, you never leave me in peace even in my own sanctum.'

'Your sanctum! *yours!* Ma foi! the latest joke. Why, you haven't a sanctum where I mayn't come in and spoil your very precious peace. Casper, you are an unmitigated humbug, a downright hypocrite.'

Was I not one in very truth? I leaned forward, feigning to knock the ashes from my pipe, striving to master and crush the wild beating of my heart. 'And what does

your imperious Highness want? a ride, a new dress, more music, or money?'

'Now, Cas, you know that if I want money, I come boldly and ask for a cheque.'

'So you do, my dear, just as a highwayman cries "Stand and deliver;" but I *have* heard of such a thing as a young lady coolly emptying my purse, to buy pretty trifles from a Roman cameo-seller. Of course you don't know such a young lady, though.'

She laughed gaily.

'Here's the money,' she said, tossing some gold to me. 'Don't say I don't pay my debts.'

I threw it back.

'You may as well keep it, Miss Nina,

for it's as broad as it's long; you'll come for more, you extravagant fairy.'

With a sudden change of face, she came and sat down on the rug, looking up with an expression, half grave, half wistful—

'*Am* I very extravagant, Casper? do I squander your money too fast?'

'My dear Nina! spend what you will, and ask me for anything you want. All I have is yours,' said I energetically; 'my greatest pleasure is to gratify you in everything.'

Impulsive, quick to emotion, I saw the tears gather in her dark eyes, and she kissed my hand as it lay on my knee.

'You were always too kind and good to me, Casper, and indeed I am grateful

for it, if affection is any repayment, for I could not love you better if you were in very truth my brother.'

A sudden cold chill went through me, and a mist came before my eyes. Was that all? did I know now to the full one secret of my own heart, one object of my life, to be gained at all costs and hazards? Stewart Claverhouse had told me truly, years ago, that I had no ambition, save that of the pleasure-seeker; but now, if I had not his grand ambition, I had an object which he had not. I could not answer her last words directly, and so turned it off.

'Well, fayre Una, remember you are to be as extravagant as you like; it's what such fairies as you are born for.'

'That is what troubles me, Casper. No one is born to do nothing, to be nothing. I can understand,' she said, with a heightening colour and dilating eyes, 'the thoughts and aspirations of such men as Michael Angelo and Mendelssohn! ambition for one's art! fame for that which we love! for such fame I could die! for such ambition I could lay down everything!'

'Nina, how you look!' exclaimed I, startled, feeling that something in her vaulted far beyond anything that I dreamed of or understood; 'are women, too, ambitious for themselves, apart from the one they love?'

'Ay, apart from the self-aggrandizement which too often passes for ambition.

True ambition will not stoop to meanness or crime, lest it degrade itself and the art or science or country for which it labours and crowns with its laurels. You,' she said, and her deep blue eyes seemed actually to glow, 'you, who have none, cannot understand or comprehend the sacrifices such ambition will make or the height to which it soars. In your secret heart it awakens a sneer, perhaps at times a certain wonder, but no emulation; yet you have talents.'

'Ay,' said I, with a new and strange shadow in my very heart, 'but all are not born alike. I have talents, position, wealth, and a love of ease and pleasure, if you will. I have all I want. Why should I burden myself with this Hydra, this weary am-

bition, whether for oneself or one's art? I *don't* understand it or its pleasures. It is all toil and discontent, ever crying, "More, more," even while mounting.'

'There is happiness in that very element,' she answered; 'in every upward step, in the very toil and labour, in the mere *doing*. There is happiness in overcoming, one by one, the very difficulties which lie in the upward road.'

'Your moralists tell another tale, Nina. Was Cromwell the Protector as happy a man as Cromwell the farmer? Was Pitt the minister a happier man than if he had lived in private?'

'Yes. To him and such as him a life of obscure tranquillity is death. You might as well cage an eagle, and think it will be

happier because it is fed and warmed and kept safe from the attacks of its enemies. Moralists sit in their studies and write a great deal of nonsense. It's a mistake, too often a sickening cant, to call ambition, in the abstract, an evil and miserable thing —a curse. Like most other things implanted in man by God, it is a gift, and must be guarded and bounded by His laws. It only sinks down and becomes a curse when man abuses it. Your happiness is to lie at ease in the soft valley; Stewart Claverhouse's is in climbing the mountain.'

'Then where is his advantage, if, after all his labour, he is no happier than I am?'

'Ay, but he is. God, in His wisdom,

has so ordered it. Perhaps to you I had better say that man is so created that the highest happiness (as a rule) is attained by him who works in one form or another; and as a proof of it, you see that most men of some position and competence or wealth—men who could live as idle a life as you if they chose—most of such men, I say, *make* work if they haven't got it.'

'Stop, Nina. We all know what setting one's own tasks means—working in a very easy way.'

'No, you are wrong, Casper, entirely wrong. Some take to farming, others to science, the arts, literature, various social subjects, politics, working hard, too. Take the Legislature, the upper and lower House: not one member of either is obliged

to take on him that work. He gains nothing by it; no money, only more position and consideration.'

'And patronage, Madame?' said I.

'Of course. The patronage, the consideration of his compeers, the occupations, form a large part of his happiness; it is a field for his energies, which would otherwise kill him with *ennui*. Man is a busy, working, active being, and when he is lifted above the struggles for daily bread, his restless brain turns to something else. Why, the House of Commons is largely, if not half, composed of men of fortune, who could sit idle instead of plunging into politics; and the rest, hard-working lawyers, mercantile men, and others living by their hand or brain, find motives enough to

make them work still harder. It is a pleasure in itself to work out the result of your own labours. It is seen in a child. Take two boys of ordinary energy and capacity: give one a toy-ship (for example) and to the other materials for making one, so that he can turn out an equally pretty vessel,—which do you suppose will have the greatest enjoyment in his toy? Of course the boy who made it, tired himself over it, cut himself, failed often, and tried again and again, till he succeeded. The toy is his creation; the object of his hopes, fears, ambition; the result of his own labours, and he is rightfully proud of it.'

'Then,' said I, 'a man has an equal right to be proud of his labour; yet I

often hear you blame those purse-proud upstarts who have worked hard enough for their fortune, too.'

'Yes, so I do, when on the strength of it they become upstart, over-boastful, over-bearing, and pretentious. The principle is good, but it has run wild and over-grown. You never heard me blame a man who, without that pretension, takes an honest pride in his being self-made. Such a man was George Stephenson, James Watt, and many others like them, and such men I honour.'

'You set a great store by *work*,' said I. 'Why should a man work if he has neither necessity or inclination for it? Take me, for instance, and I am a type of many. I have birth, position, a fair share of good

looks and talents, and a good fortune; but the corner that I suppose should be filled up by ambition or energy is occupied by a vein of idleness, dislike to trouble, if you will, a pleasure-seeking vein. I seek it and find it. Why should I work when I hate it? I am as happy in my way as your Pitts were, or as Stewart Claverhouse is in his manner. In what, then, is he better off than me?'

'In the mere possession of energy, without which talent is useless. If you were both put down penniless in this London, he would make his way and become something, and you would not.'

'Well, even admitting that, did I make myself?'

'No, but we can overcome nature to a

great degree—root out or subdue our bad qualities.'

'The deuce we can!' said I, 'but I am still unanswered. I have got as much pleasure as I want in the easy life I lead. Why should I burden myself with any definite labour? Isn't the first aim and end of life happiness, enjoyment, getting the most out of it that we can, whether in work or idleness?'

'The mere pursuit of personal happiness is not the end and aim of life,' said Nina, energetically; 'and if all men thought and acted so, the world would be a thousand times more miserable than it is. We were created, not for idleness, but

"To work, that each to-morrow
Finds us further than to-day."

Adam was told, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread."'

'Stop there, Nina! on your own ground that was a curse.'

'Yes. The hard labour by which most men gain their daily bread was given as a curse; but that doesn't say that all work is so, or that any man has a right to be a mere pleasure-seeker, it is an abuse of the talents intrusted to us. "To whom much is given, of him shall much be required." An account must be rendered of every penny spent, every word spoken, every action done.'

'To whom, I want to know?' demanded I. 'Who will ask it?'

The blue eyes opened wide.

'Why,—oh, poor Casper, you don't

believe in God!' she broke out suddenly, kneeling before me, and hiding her face against my breast.

'Nina, Nina, don't! I am too hopeless and worthless a sceptic for your tears! I don't deserve them, my darling,' I said, bending over her; but there was a strange, horrible choking feeling in my throat—a terrible dread that I had lost all but her pity, yet no ray of her faith in a Deity shot through me. From my cradle I had scoffed, and scepticism wrapped my soul like a mantle. Soul! have I a soul? Is there a hereafter? It *cannot* be! ye powers of darkness! There cannot be an eternal future of nameless gloom and terror! I dare not believe *now*. It were nothing but damnation! * * *

Presently she rose, and said sorrowfully, 'I wish I could make you have faith even as a grain of mustard seed, but I am not good and wise enough.'

'You? Nina, you are like the angels you believe in. I am not fit to touch you, I believe!'

'Hush, hush! You are still my own dear old Casper; only don't talk so.'

Before I could answer there came a tap at the door. It was a relief to me.

'Come in,' I said.

It was one of the servants.

'Miss Nina, the foreign girl you told me was to come is here, in your boudoir, as you ordered.'

'Yes, that is right!' exclaimed Nina. 'Come, Cas, you may witness the sitting.'

I followed her up-stairs to her boudoir, and there, sure enough, stood the picturesque Roman cameo-seller and her handsome dog, which I did not caress this time. Anna saluted us in her usual graceful way, and Nina, busily placing her easel and chalks, said,

'You have been used to sitting for a model, haven't you, Anna-Marie?'

'Sì, Signora, to painters; to no sculptor, except the Signor Angelo.'

'Ah; no. Well, I am only going to do you in chalks—you and your noble hound. What is his name?'

'Corsare, Mademoiselle.'

'How will you keep him quiet when you are placed?' said Nina.

'If Mademoiselle will tell me how she

wants him placed, I will do it, and bid him stay so. He will not move then till I order him.'

'The dear old fellow!' exclaimed Nina, hugging the wolf-hound; 'he shall be rewarded with a dishful of choice bits, the great beauty, that he shall. Anna, how do you think I got at you?'

'Je ne sais pas,' said the girl, with a curious, half-amused smile.

'Very simply. I recognized you as the original of the "Fiora di Maria," and some others, and I guessed that Mr Claverhouse would know where to find you, so I sent to ask him last evening, and he answered that he would send you a message to come to me, which of course

he has done. How will you stand—what attitude?'

'As Mademoiselle wishes,' said Fleur-de-Marie, lifting her hand to cover a smile, which, however, Nina caught, and broke into her sweet, joyous laugh. 'Casper, she is laughing at me; what a shame, Anna!'

'Oh, Mademoiselle,—je ne riais pas.'

'You were smiling, though, at me; there now, you are covering your lips again.'

'Mais Mademoiselle est si drôle!' said the cameo-seller, fairly covering her lips to stifle the soft rippling laugh that was irresistible.

'Am I? well, never mind; laugh as much as you like, Anna. Casper, please draw forward that great marble vase.

Now, Anna, stand by it, and open your image box; take the prettiest statuette in your right hand, and rest your left on Corsare's head,—so,' said she, coming up and placing her model as she wished; and a more graceful attitude, a more perfectly beautiful picture than the child and dog presented, I never saw.

For some time there was silence, while Nina's fingers sketched boldly and rapidly the outlines of her model, to get the position in the first sitting. Gifted in all things, taught by the best master, Nina was already a very beautiful amateur artist, and quite equal to do justice to the model before her. Silence did not reign for more than half-an-hour, for then Nina began asking the Provençale her history,

of which, however, Anna gave her little more than she had to me; and from that we passed easily enough to various subjects,—travels, the arts, politics; and here Anna was more unreserved. I was astonished at the amount the wanderer had seen in her short life, at her information, and the keenness and breadth of her observation; nothing had passed her by unnoticed.

The two hours flew by, and the clock chimed half-past one before we thought it was much over twelve.

'Well,' said Nina, rising, and laying a half-sovereign on Anna's open box, 'I have got the position perfect. When can you give me another sitting?'

'When the Signora pleases.'

'On Thursday, then, at eleven; so au revoir, Anna-Marie.'

'Adieu, Mademoiselle; Monsieur, bon jour.'

And girl and dog, fellow-wanderers, went forth again. Nina from the window watched them out of sight, and then turned away with a heavy sigh.

'My sweet Una, what is the matter?'

'It makes me sad, Casper,' she said; 'that beautiful child, well educated, delicately born, delicately bred, as refined in every way, as much a lady in every sense, as I am, and yet I live in luxury, and she is a homeless wanderer, alone in the wide world.'

And with a very quiet, saddened brow she turned to put away her drawing.

MANUSCRIPT XV.

THE ROOT STRIKES DEEP.

You, to whom I address this story of wrong and misery, give me, if you can, some pity; and, if there is a God, pray for one to whom belief *now* is eternal death, whose only hope is that soul and immortality have no existence; one who is accursed, body and soul, if he has a soul.

You have seen the dark fell thing that had coiled about me, poisoning what

should have been a pure fountain; and you have seen that, side by side with it, lay the strange mysterious fascination which drew me so irresistibly to Stewart Claverhouse.

It is said that the dove is fascinated by the serpent. Has no one ever thought that the serpent might be fascinated by the dove, the devil by the angel?

Well, I went one day to his house, as I had said I should, and asked for him. His Italian attendant Luigi showed me to the drawing-room, saying that his master was in his studio at work, and he believed M. de Cavagnac was with him, but he would see.

So, then, that man had the *entrée* of the great sculptor's studio; I had not.

I turned to look round the drawing-room, and my attention was instantly attracted by a full-length portrait of a young and lovely woman, grandly beautiful; but the face was certainly not strange to me, that clear, dark, colourless complexion, that silky waving hair actually gleaming in its raven blackness, those perfectly-chiselled features, and large, grave, melancholy grey eyes,—I knew them all; I had seen them a hundred times in Stewart. Had *she* died young? And while I gazed and wondered, Claverhouse and the Italian came in together; and the moment the usual greetings had passed I asked,

'Stewart, who was this lady?'

'She was my mother.'

'I thought it; I always thought you

must be like your mother, and have always wished to see her.'

Cavagnac had paused before the picture, gazing up into the noble face, and I heard him murmur—

'How beautiful! Oh, how beautiful!' but he started and turned away as my voice struck his ear.

'Stewart, what was her name?' said I suddenly.

'Cora.'

I stood looking at the portrait, fascinated.

Cora! What a sweet name! like her face. Oh, if my mother had been like this one!

'Did she die young?' I said, half to myself, but the sculptor answered it quietly,

'Yes; when I was born.'

'Then you cannot remember her?'

'Remember her! I never knew her save in my dreams.'

'And you were an only child, the Doctor told me,' I added, turning round.

He half smiled.

'You must have mistaken him, Casper. I am the only living one of four, all older than me,—they all died.'

But the subject pained him, and to change it I asked—

'Shall you be at the opera to-night? they play "Der Freischütz" for the first time this season.'

'So I saw; yes, I shall go,—Guido and I. Are you disengaged, Casper?'

'Why, no—I am in attendance to-night

on my mother and Nina to a concert, and then to finish the evening at my brother's; they give a ball.'

'I remember that Lady Falconbridge told me of it the other day when I met her. We will drop in after the opera, you know,' he added, smiling; 'they are so kind as to give me fairly the *entrée* to their house and *carte blanche* to bring any one I like. Cavagnac is a great favourite there.'

'Indeed!' said I negligently, but giving a furtive glance at the Count. The dark, keen eyes met mine full for a moment, and then went straight to Stewart's face, but with what a change! how they softened into inexpressible tenderness and love! I am quite sure that man would at any moment

have laid down his life for Stewart Claverhouse, round whom every tendril, every fibre of his nature seemed to have twined. I could understand it perfectly, and hated him the more because it was returned measure for measure, while I was excluded; I, who from our boyhood had vainly coveted what this Italian had won without an effort.

Stay! was it without an effort? love begets love. Had I given what he had? did I *love* Stewart? no; I was fascinated, drawn by some invisible power in him, but love could find no place beside the dark horrible thing that lay coiled round my heart, and had of late taken a darker, deadlier form.

What had this Cavagnac that I had

not, to make Stewart love him as he did? his beauty? his mind? his heart? which had first sought the other? and what, oh, what subtle antagonism had ever stood between me and Claverhouse? I must know; and the moment the Italian went, saying he would return soon, I turned abruptly to Claverhouse.

'Stewart, *what* is it that has always stood between us, a barrier I cannot pass? what is it in me that is wanting?'

I spoke passionately, suddenly, and he gazed at me with a look which, for a second half-wondering, grew deeply, painfully sorrowful,—that strange look of sublime, almost more than human pity, which I had seen once before, and never could forget if I were to live a thousand years.

Then he laid his slight hands on my shoulder, looking into my very heart with those deep, spiritual eyes.

'Casper, you want soul.'

The words were few; the voice very low, very grave, strangely pitying in its touching, wondrous music; but I staggered as if lightning had struck me, and turning from him covered my face.

Was this the answer I had looked for, hoped for, watched for, for years? was it what I expected? no; and it stifled and crushed me beneath a load of inferiority. Between this pure being and me there stood, then, an invisible mystery; something that I *felt* was there, yet could not see or comprehend; something far above

and beyond my range of vision, with which I had neither part nor sympathy.

I seemed groping in darkness that I could feel; heart and brain were in a tumult of fierce, burning torture. One moment my impulse was to turn and fly his presence for ever; the next to fling myself at his feet and cry,—

'Teach me, even me, what is this wondrous soul!'

But his soft, cool hand touched my burning fingers; his gentle, grave voice fell like soothing music on my ear.

'Forgive me, Casper; the answer should never have passed my lips if I had known it would pain you.'

I dropped my hands, and mastering myself, faced him again.

'The pain is not your doing, Stewart; the question was mine. I drew the answer, and on me be it. But now I have it. I am only puzzled—strangely pained. The answer is to me incomprehensible. I don't understand all it involves.'

A troubled expression came over his fine face. I could see that he had not calculated on a darkness so profound as was betrayed in my last words. To give the simple answer which he felt, was one thing; but to explain it to a mind obtuse to all that he believed and lived in, was something very different—an impossibility I know *now;* but then—

'Stewart, Stewart!' I broke out at last, 'would I could understand or fathom your nature one hundredth part!'

He shook his head with a half sad smile. There was no crossing the broad, deep river that ever flowed between us.

I turned, and paced to and fro; wild, passionate thoughts surging in my brain. 'I would I had never seen him! never looked on him. Boy and man, he has haunted, fascinated, crushed me; tortured me, I know not how or why! He loves that dark Italian better than life. He can even love Luigi; but me—*me* he cannot even like!'

The last thought formed itself into words, and passed my lips before I was aware, and, low as they were muttered, reached his sensitive ear.

'Car' amico mio, I never told you that.'

'Told me? no, you are too noble, too generous to willingly give pain; but I can feel and see it! My presence gives you no pleasure, my absence no pain. I am nothing to you. You may speak of me as one of "my friends," because there is no other word. You called me amico just now, empty *façon de parler* of your flowery Italian, which you give as much to Luigi and your dog Fidelio; but I never had your confidence, never could break down your reserve. You do not count me your friend in very truth!'

'No,' he answered quietly; 'I have only one *friend*. Jonathan had but one David.'

'Yet,' I said bitterly, 'your Italians say, "If I have fifty friends it is not enough."'

'If I have one enemy, it is too much,' said a soft, deep voice that to me always had a world of irony beneath its quiet tones. 'Monsieur should give the context.'

I turned, with a start, to meet the brilliant, steadfast eyes of Guy de Cavagnac.

How I hated that man! how I feared him!—not physically, not morally, but as man fears some mysterious unseen power, untangible, invisible, save to the subtle instinct which unerringly forewarns him that it will one day do him dread, irremediable evil.

I feared his sarcasm, and writhed beneath his irony, because I could not retort it, — the shafts always struck too

deep. I hated him. I hated Stewart for loving him.

I forced myself to answer lightly, 'The context was not needed, M. le Comte.'

'Ah, non?' said he, shrugging his shoulders; 'mais c'est vrai, n'est ce pas?'

'Well enough,' said I nonchalantly. 'Good-bye, Stewart, till this evening.'

I passed out, but Claverhouse followed me. He had given a wound, and must pour in the balm.

'Casper, I am afraid you have misunderstood me. I was glad to see you when I came back to England. If your presence gave me no pleasure, if I disliked your companionship, I should have found

means to let you know it. Forgive me if I have pained you.'

'It was my doing, not yours.'

I wrung his hand and went away. His last words were in my head as I walked home. I was unanswered even now. 'If I disliked your companionship —' that was not liking *me*. Whether intentionally or not, his Jesuit answer had, for the second time, defeated me. Beyond the fascination, the strange charm of his presence, its spell faded, and the fell, dark thing that lay in my heart took deep ineradicable root.

I dreaded the evening at the Falconbridges'. I dreaded meeting Claverhouse and Cavagnac there. I hoped that they would not come, but they did, half-an-hour

after us. I heard a lady behind me whisper eagerly, 'There he is at last—the great sculptor—do you see, Mrs Norman?'

'Yes; a very handsome man, a most beautiful countenance. I met him abroad, you know. Who is that handsome man with him?—a foreigner, certainly.'

The first speaker answered,

'It is the Count de Cavagnac—an Italian.'

'Italian! with that name?'

'Oh, a nom de guerre, of course; doubtless he is a political refugee; it is quite enough that Stewart Claverhouse introduced him. They are old friends, I believe. The Count is a most fascinating man, a general favourite; there is certainly a great charm about him.'

I moved away wondering. I could see nothing to fascinate about Guy de Cavagnac—no great charm, but I suppose there must have been, for society unquestionably endorsed the opinion. Nina, too, came gaily to me.

'There they are, Cas, talking to Theodora. I'm glad the Count has come too; I like him.'

'Do you, Nina? you didn't, though, when he beat us on the river,' I added lightly.

'Oh, ma foi! I was a child, and did not know him; besides, I did like him for handling his boat so perfectly. I wonder where he learned it.'

'You had better ask, Mademoiselle.'

'I will, sir, if the fancy takes me.

Here they come!' Dancing was beginning again as Theodora and her guests came up to us.

'Bon soir, Messieurs,' said Nina, bending low; 'was the opera perfect?'

Stewart answered her. 'Perfect Weber gave it to the world, Miss Lennox, and to-night it was perfectly rendered.'

'I wish I had been there, but Aunt Georgine would go to the concert. Casper, next opera night you will be good, and take me?'

I smiled, well pleased that they should see her affection and trust in me. Blind fool that I was! should not her very frankness have warned me? I am not the only one who has strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. Oh, if we could sometimes

go over our lives again; if we could sometimes retrace only one year, recall but one mistake, one wrong spoken word, one false step; if we could recall but one misspent moment of time, how many would stand where they do now? should I be where I am now? O mother, mother! if there is a God, will He lay the whole sin at my door?

I saw the dancers whirl past me, I heard the music, and hum of voices near, but when I became again conscious of what was actually going on around, I perceived that the group had slightly altered. Theodora and another lady sat near me, and Cavagnac stood by them, talking in his quiet softened tones that had in every inflection such an echo of the voice that

from first to last I could never hear without fascination—Stewart's.

I heard it now behind me, and glanced round. There he stood, erect, easy, graceful, with Nina leaning on his arm, and two or three men, eminent artists, standing about him. The first distinct words I heard were from one of these.

'Claverhouse, Lady Falconbridge told me something about a sculpture—a perfect masterpiece, which you brought over with you. I hope you are going to let us public see it?'

'It has left my studio,' Stewart answered, with a half smile; 'it was executed to order, and is now in the owner's possession.'

'A real lover of Art, I hope, who

will not shut up so priceless a treasure?'

'I know the owner most intimately,' said Nina, her lips quivering with amusement, 'and can assure you positively that any one can see it by giving their card: it is thrown open every Thursday, from ten to four.'

'Quite right. No one has a right to horde up either art, science, or literature. You have seen this sculpture, then, Miss Lennox? you can tell us who is the owner.'

She broke into her rich, gleeful laugh, and bent low. 'C'est moi, Monsieur,—Nina Lennox has the honour to be the owner of Il gran' Maestro's masterpiece, but you votaries of Art are welcome to see it whenever you will.'

'We shall certainly avail ourselves of

your kind invitation, Miss Lennox, to-morrow, if we may; at least, I will.'

'Certainly. Ah, dancing is stopped; supper, I suppose.'

There was a general move. The group broke up, and Stewart Claverhouse passed me with Nina still leaning on his arm.

I drew back, setting my teeth hard, compressing my lips till the blood must have almost left them; but as I turned to follow the crowd, I looked up to meet Guy de Cavagnac's quiet dark glance.

Curse him! curse him a thousand times!

CHAPTER IV.

TRACKED DOWN.

It had been gloomy and lowering all day, threatening, indeed, to close in a rain or thunderstorm; for amidst the sullen leaden grey of the clouds there was here and there that peculiar dusky reddish glow, which in summer foretells the war of the elements. As it drew towards evening the clouds deepened in their murky tints, and gathered in a black mass, through which the red still glowed, right over

London. Those who thronged the streets glanced up and hurried on their way to shelter of some kind; but the storm broke suddenly, at last, as such storms generally do: there was a flash, a gleam, that for the hundredth part of a second illumined the darkened vault above, as if heaven itself had flung wide its gates, that man might catch a glimpse of eternal light. There was a low roll of thunder, grand in its ominous majesty; then a crash, that seemed to rend the air and shake the very earth with its gigantic wrath. And then the heavens were opened, and like a deluge the rain fell; the streets, but a minute before so thronged, were deserted, the crowd vanished as by magic, where it would have been hard to say; but one, a

unit of the many, with a foreign face and dress, hastily threw on a mantle she had hitherto carried carelessly, covering alike her picturesque garb and pretty box of wares; and, with her dog, sought shelter beneath a neighbouring archway, the entrance to Mews, already pretty well filled with wayfarers, most of whom looked suspiciously on the wolf-hound, and some muttered anathemas on him. One man, evidently a foreigner, who wore a great loose coat and broad hat drawn low, touched the Provençale, and said in French,

'Mon enfant, is your dog quiet?'

The girl answered, 'Oui, toujours,' and turned directly to see the speaker. She knew the voice again, the figure, dress,

the *tout ensemble*, — the man who had bought the statuette of Il Angelo's 'Madonna.' Instinct, rather than any definite thought, made Anna de Laval try now to see his face, but the hat shadowed it. He evidently did not recognize her, though, as if glad of something to pass the time, he added, shuddering,

'A terrible storm; are you afraid of a thunderstorm?'

'Non, Monsieur; je l'aime bien.'

'Diable! I don't. Ugh, look at the rain, enough to drown one: how these English live in such a climate je ne sais pas.'

'Eh bien,' said Anna quietly, 'and these English wonder how the French can live under a despotism.'

'Diantre!' exclaimed the man in a low fierce undertone; 'it shall not be for long. But what do *you* know about us? Where do you come from?'

'Rome, Signor.'

The man made no answer, only looked scowlingly out on the heavy rain. So did the child for some moments, and then a thought struck her.

'It is but weary work waiting for rain,' she remarked. 'Why does not Monsieur enliven the time by smoking?'

'Ah, bon, bon, mon enfant.'

Out came cigar and fusees, and Fleur-de-Marie gained her end. The light held to the cigar illumined for full a quarter of a minute the stranger's whole face. Anna's quiet, keen glance marked every feature,

and printed them off on her mind with a secret smile. It was the living original of the miniature which Guido di Schiara had shown her. Come what would, when he left the archway she must follow him, track him down. She drew a little back into the gloom behind him, and leaned against the wall, patient, watchful, and motionless, looking at no one but him.

It had now fallen quite dark, but the rain pelted down ceaselessly for full twenty minutes, with frequent vivid flashes of lightning and heavy rolls of thunder. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the violence of the shower ceased, and it settled into a steady, hopeless, soaking rain, not heavy, but fine and penetrating. One by one those who had sought shelter

left it to make the best of their way, wherever that was.

The stranger, with a muttered curse on England and English climate, which it certainly deserved, left the archway. The cameo-seller let him get a safe distance ahead, and then, like his ghost, or shadow, followed him, utterly regardless of the rain. Corsare kept close at her side. But it was no easy chase; for the man, though he kept a swift and steady course, looked around and behind him continually in a nervous way, as if fearful of his shadow on the glistening pavement, as it shortened and lengthened between the lamp-posts. But for all that he never saw the slight, dark figure that was behind, sometimes quite close, and hidden by only a few

people. Once, nothing hid her but the tall, stalwart form of a stately policeman.

So, as unerringly as a sleuth-hound the Provençale tracked every step the man took, down Regent-street, Waterloo Place, and by Charles-street into the Haymarket, so past the National Gallery into the Strand, and then he kept straight on, till near Somerset House he paused and entered a shop. Urged still by the now thoroughly-aroused detective instinct rather than by connected thought, the cameo-seller hurried forward to see what the shop was and what the man did there.

It was a gunsmith's, the name Stephen Hurne. She looked cautiously in through the window. The man, her chase, stood at the counter buying—what? She watched

intently. He took up a very small, plainly-finished revolver, examined it closely, laid down some money, put the weapon in his pocket, and turned to go. Anna-Marie drew back quickly, and the man passed out and resumed his swift way. The girl followed.

He kept on now without stopping into Fleet-street and up Ludgate Hill, but there he slackened speed and turned up the Old Bailey. She was close behind him then, and kept pretty near, under cover of the pelting rain and darkness, but in a minute or two the man turned into a narrow dark street, and vanished suddenly into one of the houses. The Provençale paused to mark the number of it, and then turned back into Ludgate Hill,

shivering now, weary, chilled, cold, and wet, but she had only one thought, one face before her: she must make her way straight to Guido di Schiara; and the child patiently set her face westward, fatigue, and cold, and wet put aside for the time, scarcely felt at first. It was a very long way back to B— street, where, in a handsome set of chambers, Cavagnac had taken up his residence, and it was late when she reached the house and rang.

'Is the Count de Cavagnac within?'

The footman stared, evidently inclined to shut the door in her face; but the Count had given positive commands that no one who asked for him should be turned away; if he was out, his own confidential servant was to be told. So the

footman rang a bell that sounded somewhere above, for evidently answering it there came down a very quiet, very respectable man of about forty, dressed in black, a Frenchman, though his English was extremely good.

'You rang my bell, George?' he said.

'I did, Mounseer Auguste. Here's a girl asking for the Count, but she didn't ought to see him, by her looks.'

M. Auguste turned his kind face to the child, and a smile came over it.

'Votre nom, c'est Anna, n'est ce pas, petite?' he said.

'Oui, Monsieur.'

'Bien, entrez, restez ici un moment.'

Girl and dog passed into the hall, much to the disgust of George. Auguste vanished

up-stairs, but in two minutes he came back.

'Follow me, petite, to M. le Comte, and your dog too.'

'We are so wet,' said Anna, hesitating; 'very wet.'

'N'importe, pauvrette, venez.'

The cameo-seller followed him up the wide staircase and along a corridor, where he opened a door, bade her enter, and closed it noiselessly behind her. It was a large handsome room, brilliantly lighted, and on the hearth before a bright blazing fire stood Guido di Schiara's tall form, and Corsare bounded to him, while Anna paused.

'Come here, Anna, to me,' said the Count's soft voice. 'Why, my child, you

are wet, wet through, and your little hands are like ice,' he said, taking them in his own warm hands; 'you are shivering. Anna mia, you have surely never been out in this storm and rain?'

'Oui, Monsieur, I could not help it. I have something to tell you.'

'Not a word yet,' said Cavagnac, ringing the bell.

'Corsare, lie down and dry, mon brave. Anna, give me your mantle.'

But her slight fingers were too chilled, and the nerveless hands dropped. Cavagnac stooped, unfastened it, and took it off.

'Auguste,' he said, as the attendant entered, 'will you be kind enough to get this mantle dried, and bring me a small glass of hot brandy-and-water, and some-

thing to eat? This child is chilled through and through.'

'Mais, Monsieur, ce n'est rien,' began Anna-Marie; as Auguste departed.

'Tiens-toi, ma chère enfant,' said Cavagnac, smiling, as he laid his hand on her shoulder; 'such a delicate Provence rose will not live in this cold England unless it is taken care of.'

The Provençale trembled under his touch, the sensitive lip quivered; and, suddenly bowing her face, she burst into tears, not loud and noisy, but deep, heavy weeping, that shook her slender frame with its force.

Few men can see a woman weep unmoved, still less a young fragile girl, almost a child in years, and Cavagnac's

heart beat fast as it had never beat before.

'My child, you are over weary.'

'Monsieur, mille pardons, mais je suis errante, et je ne suis pas habituée à la bonté.'

Cavagnac could not speak for a minute for the strange, deep aching at his heart. He leaned against the mantlepiece, perfectly still, until he had mastered himself, while the wolf-hound put up his great shaggy head and licked his hand; and then Auguste came quietly in, set down a small salver, and retired as quietly.

'Drink this, Anna,' said Cavagnac, offering her the glass; 'it is not too hot—drink.'

She drank it. If that hand had offered her poison she would almost have taken

it; and then he made her eat, while he gave the dog sundry choice morsels, with an entire recklessness as to the handsome rug, which would have horrified any housekeeper.

'Now your little hands are warm,' he said, touching them, 'and your lips have more colour; that is right. You may now tell me what you came to say, mon enfant.'

'Monsieur, I have found and tracked down M. Louis Bonheur.'

'You have? Anna, you are invaluable; you were born for a detective.'

'As Monsieur was. Will he hear the details?'

'Certainly, mon enfant.'

In a few short words the cameo-seller

told him the story, not, of course, forgetting the revolver.

The Count listened in silence, and then said,

'To one so keen as you I need hardly ask if you noted the name of the shop?'

'Stephen Hurne, Monsieur.'

'And nearly opposite Somerset House?'

'Yes.'

Cavagnac rang the bell, and Monsieur Auguste came in, bringing Anna's mantle.

'Auguste, at nine o'clock to-morrow go into the Strand, and nearly opposite Somerset House you will see a gunsmith's named Stephen Hurne. About eight this evening M. Louis Bonheur bought a very small pocket revolver there; go in and ask for one exactly like it—your friend

has shown you his, and you want its exact fellow—comprenez vous bien?'

'Oui, M. le Comte.' Auguste bowed and retired.

'He knows his business well,' said Cavagnac, with a quiet smile, 'and so do you, pretty one; so now for my part of the compact,' and he put two sovereigns into her hand. 'Keep your watch still. If you see him, track him, if with any one especially—'

'And if they part, Monsieur, which am I to follow?'

'I must trust much to your own discretion, Anna. Follow whichever you think is going about the most important business; but those details I must leave to you.'

'Merci, Monsieur,' said Anna-Marie, rising; 'come, Corsare.'

'Stay, ma chère Anna; if it rains you cannot go. I don't like letting you go alone so late at all.'

'Ce n'est rien, Monsieur,' interposed the Provençale, hastily. 'I am used to it, and it does not rain now.'

He looked at her a moment, and gave way, but he went down with her himself to the hall-door to make sure that the rain had really ceased; but when she had gone some little distance he took his felt hat, and noiselessly followed her. He kept the slight figure that flitted on before him in sight, till it vanished into the shelter of the humble lodging she occupied. No harm could come to her while he was near her.

And then he returned to his own handsome rooms, but somehow the rooms seemed darker and very lonely. Where was the graceful form and soft Madonna face? Where was the sweet, plaintive voice that touched him as no face or voice had ever touched him before in all his changeful life? The room was void—the child was gone.

MANUSCRIPT XVI.

A GLIMMER OF LIGHT,—A POISONOUS WORD.

I CAME in one morning, and, looking for Nina, found her in her boudoir before the easel, sketching rapidly, and only looking up now and then at her model, Anna de Laval.

'Busy as a bee,' said I, shutting the door.

I was welcomed with a bright, 'You, Cas? I'm glad you are back,' and a

quiet, 'Bon jour, Monsieur,' from the cameo-seller.

What a beautiful couple they were. Each so patrician, each such a complete type of their race; and as I looked at them, I thought of Nina's words only a week before. It did seem strange. There stood the two young girls, equally well born, equally beautiful, equally refined and sensitive in their delicate womanhood, and yet one had every luxury, friends and love surrounding her; the other utterly homeless, friendless, a wanderer in the streets of a great city, exposed to insult, danger, and temptation.

The thought was before me when I caught Nina's large thoughtful blue eyes fixed on me, reading my face, for her

glance went to the Provençale, and she shook her head sadly, but presently she asked her abruptly—

'Anna-Marie, is not your life very precarious?'

'Sometimes, Mademoiselle.'

'Sometimes! it must be miserable! If you were sick and ill, what would become of you?'

'I might get through, or I might die, Mademoiselle,' said the girl with a quiet sadness that startled me. 'It would not matter. I have no one who would care.'

'Not one, Anna? I know who would care.'

'Eh, Mademoiselle?'

'For one, the Maestro.'

'Ah, the Signor Angelo is so noble; he is too generous.'

'And I should care, Anna.'

'Mademoiselle?'

'Don't you believe me?'

'Ma chè, Signora; I am only a cameo-seller. You cannot care for me,—a stranger.'

'Why not? the Signor does, it seems.'

'Ah; Il Angelo. But I am no stranger to him,' said the child.

Nina's pencil moved on silently, but I could see that she was struggling with strong feelings.

'I wish I was rich! Oh, I wish I was rich!' I heard her murmur.

I bent over her chair, and said, 'Why that wish, Nina? you have carte-blanche.'

'It is your money, Casper.'

'Mine is yours, my dear child,' said I quietly.

'Not quite, Cas.'

I stooped, and whispered in her ear, 'Your pleasure is mine. Ask her what I know is in your heart: we can settle our score presently.'

She glanced up at me with a half tremulous smile.

'You are very kind, Cas.'

But for full ten minutes she worked in silence, while Anna's dark dreamy eyes, though fixed on her dog, evidently saw scenes or faces far away. Whose? I wonder. She started at Nina's voice.

'Anna, if you were a peasant I would ask you to be my attendant; being a lady

as much as I am, that would not do. Yet I want to take you from your present life so much; oh, so much! what can I do?'

The Provençale raised her large mournful eyes with a look, a smile, so sad in its oldness and desolateness, that it pained me inexpressibly.

'Rien, Mademoiselle.'

'Anna, I am a woman like yourself; you can have no reason for refusing my friendship.'

'Mademoiselle honours me; she follows her generous heart, and not her reason.'

'I do. I will educate you for a governess, a singer, promote anything for which you have taste and talent. Is not that reason?'

'I saw the Southern's brow flush darkly, then grow perfectly colourless, and her glance went straight from Nina to my face with a world of expression, part of which I am sure I read aright. I may have been mistaken, but I think not. The money, she knew, would come from me, and she would neither lay Nina or herself under an obligation to me,—to *me* she would owe nothing. Yet it was a tempting offer; to regain her lost position and lift her out of poverty and misery was not a chance that would occur again. But she refused it.

'Mademoiselle, je vous remercie mille fois, mais je ne peux pas accepter votre bonté.'

'Casper, isn't this child enough to provoke a saint?'

'Which you are not, mignonne,' said I. 'I suppose Anna-Marie knows her own affairs best.'

Nina shook her head.

'But, Anna, you take no time to consider; you cannot *like* your wandering, precarious life.'

'It has its charms, too, Mademoiselle, in its very change.'

'An evasive answer,' said I. 'Are you too proud to accept favour from any one, Anna?'

'Non, Monsieur; one could not go through life like that,' she answered, giving me a keen look.

Wrongly or rightly, I again interpreted

it, 'It is you and your money that I refuse,' and it stung me, I hardly knew why,—stung me into something of a sneer.

'Yet you act against your words, Marie; if your friend the Maestro were to make you the same offer as Miss Lennox, would you refuse it?'

I shall never forget the look that girl gave me, the proud lip quivering, the delicate nostrils distended; yet, impulsive Southern as she was, she answered calmly, though I *felt* her contempt in every quiet cadence—

'Monsieur may like to know that before he left Rome the Signor Angelo offered to do for Anna de Laval all that a noble, high-souled man could do for a poor friendless wanderer.'

'And you *refused?*' exclaimed impetuous Nina.

'I refused. Not, Monsieur,'—turning again to me—'because I was too proud, but because I already owed him a greater debt of kindness than I could or can ever repay.'

'You must be very clever,' said Nina, 'to have made him accept your refusal.'

How the girl's mobile face changed again in answering Nina. 'I only did it, Mademoiselle, by giving a promise with it.'

'And that was?'—

'To claim of him the assistance I then rejected at no distant day.'

'By which he meant soon?'

'No, Signora; it might be two, three,

or four years. The gran' Dio may send, that I shall never have to claim his generosity.'

I saw by Nina's smile that she understood the girl's feelings and high-wrought delicacy, but I did not. It seemed to me absurd, over-fine drawn, and unnecessary, save for a reason which, though obvious to me, did not seem to have influenced her. I spoke out.

'Why, in the name of sense, Anna, you should not I can't see, except for a worldly reason, which does not seem to have influenced either you or the Maestro, —he in his offer, and you in your refusal, —I mean, the almost impossibility of escaping the world's misinterpretation and evil judgment.'

'Monsieur, firstly, the world would have known nothing of it; and if it did, Il Angelo stands in his high integrity above its evil judgment, and I below it. Neither of us care for it.'

Nina lifted her sweet face to mine, and said simply, '"To the pure all things are pure."'

For one second something in me seemed to stand still. I felt mentally as if I had received a stab, and I was conscious, darkly, of a vague, miserable sense of inferiority, of something, beautiful and high, from which I was shut out for ever, though even this cameo-seller lived within its halo and breathed its atmosphere. I crushed down the feeling, and restraining a more scoffing answer, said—

'That is an easy and false sophistry; not true in the world, and impossible to act upon.'

Nina I saw was too pained to answer, but the Provençale said—

'Monsieur is, then, wiser than God; the eyes of his soul see further than the Deity into the truth.'

'Ma foi, bell' Anna,' said I lightly, 'I'm not going to argue now as I did in Rome; I'm too lazy; so bon jour.'

I went to my study and smoked, but the words haunted me; they were always coming across me.

'Deity, soul, truth. What is truth?'

I turned restlessly, and bent over an open book on the table; but I

started as my glance fell on Plato's words—

'Truth is the body of the Deity, and light His shadow.'

There was a pencil-note in the margin.

'This classic philosopher was, it seems, as weakly credulous as learned moderns, who, at least, should be more enlightened. It is degrading to see man deliver up his intellect a slave to such an empty farce, a vain foolery, the offspring of a few disordered fancies.'

I knew my mother's writing, and shut the book with a smile.

'Yes, right; wonderful credulity, gigantic slavery,' I murmured.

I look back now to that moment, and

all is horror and darkness. There is no hope, unless there is oblivion; for if not, —*If not*, was not mine the wonderful credulity, mine the gigantic slavery? and will not mine be the eternal damnation?

MANUSCRIPT XVII.

MY MOTHER LIFTS A VEIL UNCONSCIOUSLY.

If I had wished to avoid Stewart Claverhouse I should have found it impossible as long as we were in the same city, for everywhere I went I met him; the great sculptor was *fêted* and welcomed everywhere. Sometimes Dr John was with him, but he was not young, and preferred quiet; but the Count de Cavagnac was constantly with him, both at home and abroad.

'I don't like that Cavagnac, mother,' I said to her one day, 'and I can't see what Claverhouse finds in him so fascinating.'

'His taste is not singular, my dear boy. He is a general favourite; personally, I think him a most fascinating man; so does Nina.'

'You women are taken by his handsome face.'

'I am not, and certainly Nina is not, as you know, Cas. He is a singular man. I should like to know his history, and who he really is. Have you ever asked Claverhouse?'

'I! no, indeed; I might as well ask one of his own statues, for I should get about as much out of it.'

'He looks it,' laughed Georgine. 'I wonder he has never married.'

Why, indeed? I had often asked myself that question of late, with restless uneasiness; but I answered carelessly,

'Oh, I suppose, artist-like, he has created an artist ideal, the reality of which has no existence in life.'

'I don't know that,' said my mother. 'I called the other day to return the Doctor a book he lent Nina, and he—Dr John—showed me the portrait of Mrs Claverhouse. Have you seen it?'

'Yes.'

'Well, then, in his own mother Stewart Claverhouse had a living ideal.'

'In face, but what of character and intellect?' said I.

'They matched the face, if Dr John spoke truth; she must have been possessed of the same magic charm as her gifted son. Casper, was he an only child?'

'No, there were three others, but they died.'

'The poor mother! were they sons or daughters?'

'I don't know; but they died in infancy or early childhood, for Stewart cannot remember them.'

'And the father?'

'I don't know anything of him, but Stewart once showed me his miniature.'

'Was he handsome?'

'Very; but a stern — I should say a broken—man. I always thought it very

singular, the way he sent his only child to be brought up abroad.'

'Very; it could not be for cheapness, I suppose?'

'Oh no, for he was wealthy and free-handed. He spared no expense on Stewart, and I know he had an almost unlimited command of money.'

'Casper, haven't you ever wished to be as famous as he is?' said my mother suddenly.

I started, but answered with a careless laugh,

'No; it's too much trouble, mother.'

'There's no fame without it, though.'

'Precisely; therefore fame and I are strangers. I hate exertion and work. I am not ambitious.'

'And the sculptor is both laborious and ambitious?'

'Well, of course all are not born alike,' said I, yawning; 'and you know, lady mother, that we of Creole blood were never famous for an overplus of energy.'

My mother was leaning negligently back in a low American chair with a French novel held between her fingers. She dropped it on her lap, and said,

'I wish you would have the energy to choose a wife—to fall in love, as the phrase goes.'

Again I started. She did not know how nearly she had hit me. I hardly knew it myself at first, but I laughed.

'Why, mother, do you want to get rid

of me? Have Walter or Theodora put it into your head?'

'No; but it came across me the other night at their ball, when you were laughing and chatting with the Countess of Laneton's pretty daughter, Lady Maude Cleves.'

I drew a deep breath of relief, for I had feared something else nearer home.

'Did it? are you turning match-maker? Why, my old schoolmate, dashing Tom Dacre, is her faithful slave, I fancied.'

'What if he is?' said Georgine, impetuously; 'you are surely more than fit to enter the lists! Haven't you the energy to win the girl you love from any rival under the sun?'

'Parbleu! yes,' said I, almost passion-

ately. 'Where I love, no rival shall pass me by.'

Georgine looked at me puzzled.

'*Do* you love, Casper, or have you frittered away your affections on worthless objects?'

'No, mother, I have not; but when I marry, when I love, it will not be Lady Maude Cleves.'

'Who then, Casper?'

'I'll tell you when I have found my Eurydice,' I answered as I left the room.

So the mask fell from my own eyes, and showed me plainly as noonday what had been before only vaguely felt. I did love with a love that had in a few months sprung into a strong vivid life, that like a tornado must sweep all before it.

It seems so long ago now, such an immeasurable distance of time, that it might be a hundred years for all my sense of it. O Nina, Nina, looking at me through the heavy gloom with those soul-lit, sorrowful eyes, can I *now* dare to call by the holy name of love the fierce, selfish, wild passion which possessed me like a devil?

Oh, for one moment free from remorse and despair! Oh, for the power to undo the past!

CHAPTER V.

MORNING GOSSIP.

'WERE any of you at the opera last night?' asked one of a group of young men who were lounging one morning at their club, enjoying cigars, gossip, and the papers.

Two or three answered, 'Yes; why did he ask?'

'Only because I saw a strange face since my month's trip! Who is that striking-looking foreigner who was in

Lady Falconbridge's box, with her and Lady Maude Cleves? some adventurer, eh?'

'Don't know, and don't care,' one answered. 'He was out in the Park yesterday, riding a splendid chestnut.'

'Who's that?' demanded a young Guardsman, lounging up. 'Who are you fellows talking of?'

'That *distingué*-looking foreigner.'

'Oh, that man. Here, Tom Dacre, here's Herbert asking about Guy de Cavagnac.'

A fine, elegant-looking young man, with a clear, bright eye, joined the group.

'Herbert asking about him, eh?'

'Yes; who and what is he?'

'I don't know. Cavagnac isn't his real name, for he is an Italian, the bosom friend of Stewart Claverhouse, whose introduction is, of course, sufficient passport. The Count is a capital fellow; by the way, I met him last night at F—'s.'

'Oh, he patronizes F—'s, does he?' cried Herbert, laughing; 'plays, I suppose, like the deuce, or a Neapolitan?'

'Don't you believe it,' said Dacre; 'he's got his wits about him, I tell you. I don't believe a Parisian Greek would come over him. Wardour tried hard to make him play deep, but it was no go; my nabs laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and turned on his heel. Wolfgang left the table at the same time.'

'Oh, was he there?' said the young

Guardsman. 'I thought he had pulled up, Tom?'

'So he has. Oh, he draws it mild now; but, by Jove! he went the pace at college, and after it, too; took devilish good care that his mother and guardian didn't ever know the half.'

'How the deuce he managed to pay up without a split I never could tell,' said Herbert. 'I was quite moderate to him, but I had an awful blow up with my governor; so how Wolfgang was so clever caps me.'

'Don't you know?' said Tom, laughing. 'It wasn't so bad, either. He got the fellows here to give him a little time, and he went to Baden, then to Paris; he had luck at play, and in the long run won heavily at

——'s, in Paris; he broke the banks. That's how he cleared himself.'

'Ha, ha! did he play fair always?'

'For shame! yes.'

'Where did you hear it?' asked one, 'for I never heard you mention it before.'

'I only heard it recently myself, my dear fellow. I was told by this very Cavagnac, who was in Paris at the time, and—'

'Hush! there he is himself, coming in.'

'Of course you have heard the news?' said Cavagnac, entering with a general salute to the group.

'No; what?'

'Perchè! has not M. Dacre told you, or the journals?'

'We were talking, and Tom has told

us nothing,' said the Guardsman. 'What are the news?'

'The ministry was defeated last night by a large majority, and must either resign or dissolve.'

'Oh, we know that; is that all?'

'No; there has been a cabinet council already; and as I came along I heard that they were going to the country.'

'Trust the Whigs for holding on,' said Tom Dacre. 'The country won't have them; but they never know how to retire with flying colours, and will end as before in an ignominious flight.'

'Oh, be hanged to them; don't let's prose into politics,' cried a deprecating voice; but another said, yawning—

'What's the difference between politics

and policy? the last is the carrying out of the first, I should say.'

'I think,' said Cavagnac, 'that your own Bulwer defines them well: "Politics is the art of being wise for others, policy the art of being wise for oneself."'

'Very good; but, I say, Cavagnac, where did you hear that a dissolution was decided on?'

'From Claverhouse; I met him.'

'Ah, he knows some of the fellows in official quarters,' said Tom. 'Just like those Whigs; got the cheek of a highwayman's donkey.'

There was a laugh, and then the young men, Italian and Englishmen, alike plunged into politics, the pet subject of Englishmen, and as certain to be heard

where any number of them are gathered together, as any religious subject is certain *not* to be heard in any Parisian salon.

MANUSCRIPT XVIII.

SINKING.

I LOVED Nina Lennox, and mine only she must be, come what would; but when I would have taken a step to win her, to bind her to me, something seemed to hold me back and make me guard my secret still. What was that something? Was it that her purity stood between her and the deadly blight of my dark and scoffing Atheism? or was it an instinct which, disguise it as I would, told me in my secret

heart that her affection for me could never change its character; nay, more, that from her childhood upwards there had ever been between us the same fearful nightmare, want of something that had made me demand of Stewart in desperation, '*What* is it?' If I had asked her the same question, would she have given the same incomprehensible answer, 'You want soul'? I grew restless and uneasy, and could not bear her long out of my sight. I dreaded a rival; I feared I knew not what. I fretted if she did not come about me. I chafed equally at the very frankness of her affection more than at a new name she had lately given me. One sitting, sauntering in, I heard her tell Anna de Provence, 'M. Casper est mon frère adopté.' And

after that she called me often 'mon frère.'

Why did I fear rivalry? Did I feel myself inferior to the men with whom she came in contact? No. I held myself proudly the equal, of many the superior. Theirs was not the opposing influence I feared. I smiled at the mere thought that any of them could stand for a moment in my path. What, who did, then?

The serpent that had lain so many long years within me in uneasy slumber began now to uncoil and rear its hideous head and deadly form in monstrous life and strength. As a bank of black clouds gathers densely and stormily, so it now gathered up in one dense black mass, the deadly jealousy and hatred of years which had crept into my heart's core almost from

the first hour I saw him, the instinctive dislike and dread and antagonism of evil to good. The sculptor was the man whom I felt stood between me and my end; yet I was torn by doubts that tortured me between hopes and fears. Why had he remembered her so well; remembered a promise and fulfilled it, though to do so had cost him months of labour? Why had he never married? But he had only smiled and laughingly retorted the question when I had asked 'what charm he had carried about him?' Was the charm that memory? Impossible, absurd nonsense of my passionate brain. He was a mere boy then and she a child.

I had perhaps, after all, made a rival where none existed. Watch as I would, I

could not detect that he sought her out in any marked manner. In society he gave her only the same courteous attention which he gave to any other young and beautiful woman; but then I knew that if he did love her, his very love, in the chivalrous delicacy of his noble nature, would make him shelter her from the notice which so wounds a true woman's sensitive purity. I knew that he met her often at my brother's house, for they lived near us, and Nina was never two days without being some time or other with Theodora when I could not be with her, without the betrayal of an espionage, which would have lost all. And Stewart was often there, always welcomed. Was it possible for a man like him to be often

in the society of a being so gifted as Nina —a being in such perfect and exquisite harmony with every throb of his own existence—and not love her, ay, I can confess it now, such love as he could give, but of which I was utterly incapable? Mine dragged me down, down into hell, his lifted him above the earth; mine came and possessed me like a devil, his came and dwelt in him as an angel; mine was accursed, his was holy. * * *

Nina's heart, I felt sure, was still free, for I believed it impossible for a girl so young as her to love and not know it, and knowing it, she must betray it to one who watched her as I did. No change of feature or voice, no quiver of an eyelid could have escaped me.

Sitting where I do now, and looking back, I wonder sadly at my blindness.

One day, to escape thought, if possible, I sauntered into the Park, but it was crowded, and I was in no humour for encountering any one I knew. I wandered along the Serpentine into Kensington Gardens, and at last stopped near one of the rhododendron beds to light a cigar. As I did so, I noticed some one sitting on the other side of the flower-bed. I knew the figure, the dress, the very droop of the graceful head; how had Anna-Marie come there? I stood where I was, putting out the cigar, and even placing myself where, while seeing and able to hear her, she could not see me even by turning round.

Her dog was with her; for though I could not see him, I heard her talking to him once; but as she did so, I heard a step coming towards the spot, and saw a figure. So did Anna, for she looked up. The next moment she rose quickly, with a deep reverential salute to the stranger, and my lips curled as I saw that he was a priest. He was as unmistakably a gentleman, a dignified, handsome man of fifty or so, with a face which, in its mixture of benignity, firmness, and grace, reminded me of Dr John. He bowed, giving her a kind 'Good-morning' as he passed, but suddenly something, perhaps the sad beauty of the young face, seemed to strike him, and he turned back, and addressed her in French,

'My child, by your dress and face, you come from Italy. What have you in that pretty box?'

He had a fine, rich voice; very pleasant in its modulations, vigorous and full, a strange contrast to the child's plaintive, languid accents.

'I have statuettes, Monsieur le prêtre, and camei, and a few photographs; les voici.'

'And is that fine dog yours?' he asked, as he looked at her wares.

'Sì, Signor Padre.'

'You have some good photographs here,' he observed. 'Some I recognize from engravings of them — ah, yes, the "Fiora," and "Poet's Dream;" why —' I saw him look at Anna-Marie in

surprise, — '*you* are the original —'

'A votre service mille fois, Monsieur.'

He smiled a little, but took up another.

'How lovely! how perfect! what is it?'

'Monsieur, it is Il Angelo's last and most wonderful work, "The Wreck."'

'That every one is talking of? Ah, how I wish I could see the original,' said the stranger.

'Monsieur can do so easily. It is on view every Thursday.'

'Is it? can you tell me where?'

'At No. 12, —— street. If Monsieur presents his card he will be admitted.'

'Perhaps, my child, you can tell me who owns this great sculpture.'

'Mademoiselle Lennox, Monsieur.'

'Merci, petite. I will buy this one. Can you speak English?'

'Assez bien, Monsieur,' said Anna, smiling; 'but I have not been long in England.'

'I hope those who own you are kind to you, pretty one?'

'I am free, Monsieur. I am alone in the world.'

'You—so young, so delicate, and—have you *no* friends?'

'None, Monsieur, but the Maestro, and—the gran' Dio.'

'Ah, humanity, humanity, ever putting the visible created before the invisible Creator,' said the stranger, shaking his head; then, touching the large black cross she wore, he added,

'You are, I see, a Roman Catholic?'

I laughed to myself as I saw, and heard her answer, the ever-ready expressive shrug of the shoulders, the half-smile and quiet 'J'étais élevée dans l'église, Monsieur, mais j'ai vu what you call behind the curtain; I am Catholic.'

'God keep you from temptation, my child!' he said earnestly. 'Oh, it grieves me, it grieves me! all these miseries that I cannot help. All I can do is scarcely a drop in the ocean,' he said, more to himself than her.

'Monsieur, Christ commended the widow's mite more than the rich man's thousands.'

Softly as she spoke, I heard every word, and a shiver ran through me, though

I did not understand her allusion; but he did, for he thanked her, and bidding 'God keep her,' went on his way.

I, too, stole away. 'God' again! I hated the very word, for it was a bond between Claverhouse and Nina which I could never have.

Who was this stranger? Should I ever see him again?

MANUSCRIPT XIX.

DR HARRINGTON.

It was, if I remember rightly, the day after I had seen Anna de Laval and the stranger, that about ten o'clock Stewart Claverhouse's groom brought me a note from his master, but did not wait for an answer. It needed none, save my own appearance, for it was only a line or two, asking me to dinner that evening, to meet a small party, some of whom were old acquaintance.

I sat with the note in my hand—shall I say thinking? for the feelings that surged in my brain were not thought.

Should I go? what use to refuse? I could not habitually avoid him, and yet how I dreaded his presence! because I dreaded, hated to feel that in his presence I was utterly powerless to withstand the influence of the subtle charm, the incomprehensible fascination which I could only shake off when away from him. Near him, the very struggle to resist and case myself against that power was torture; away from him, it was little less suffering to give full rein to my dark passions.

I knew, too, that I was sure to meet Guy de Cavagnac in Stewart's house, and

that man I hated as one can only hate a man who, one feels, reads your very heart, and feared him as one only can fear a sure and adverse fate. And such to me was Guy de Cavagnac.

Besides, if he could, I never could forget how he had twice humbled, outwitted me, defied me, and wounded my vanity, years ago, on the river; and again, not two months ago, when I went down to see my brother at Dover; besides feeling, whenever I encountered him, that I was in no way his match. Strange that, though his voice, accent, his very intonation, was to my ear so like Stewart's, it rarely failed to ruffle me; his hand, so like Stewart's in its singular beauty, I could not bear to touch

me, while Stewart's voice and touch soothed me.

I would face them all. Why should I shrink like a coward? And I went.

When I entered the drawing-room I found the guests already there. The party made only ten in all—Claverhouse, Dr Fantony, the Count de Cavagnac (of course), two old schoolfellows, Tom Dacre and Gus Seymour, now a rising barrister, myself, the Earl of Laneton, my brother Walter, the eminent artist, M—, and a stranger—*the* stranger of the Gardens. Claverhouse at once introduced me.

'Let me introduce to you another *ancien élève* of my uncle's. Mr St Leger Von Wolfgang, the Rev. Dr Harrington,—an old friend, Casper, of Dr John's.'

'Whom,' said I as I bowed, 'I have had the pleasure of seeing before.'

'Indeed!' said Dr Harrington, with a grave smile. 'I am not aware that I have ever seen you, Mr Von Wolfgang.'

'Were you not in Kensington Gardens yesterday, Dr Harrington, talking to a very beautiful, high-born-looking Roman cameo-seller? Passing some way off, I saw you—at least I think I am not mistaken.'

'No,' said he. 'It was I. I did speak to such a child,—a most singular child.'

'She is very singular; an old *protégée* of Claverhouse. I suppose, Dr Harrington, you recognized in her the original of some of his most exquisite works?'

'Directly. No one could miss the like-

ness who had seen even good engravings. She told me how I could see his last great work, the "Wreck." It must be wonderful, even judging it by a photograph. The original of the dog I see in Fidelio there on the rug; but where did he, I wonder, find one for that most perfect of all the faultless group, the one living figure?'

'You have asked the right person, Monsieur,' said Cavagnac, sauntering up; 'the original is his own cousin, Mademoiselle Lennox, though Claverhouse did it from memory.'

'Indeed!' he answered, and I turned away, biting my lips.

'Who is Dr Harrington, Stewart?' I asked him, aside.

'He is an old friend of Dr John's and

mine. The church is ours, St Augustine's, —— street. Your cousin knows him. He is a noble-hearted man, very clever and energetic, as much born for a priest as some are born lawyers or politicians.'

'Or sculptors, or idlers like me,' added I, laughing. 'I was born to idleness, I believe.'

'No man was born to idleness in this working world,' said the sculptor gravely. 'God never gave man brain and soul to waste in idleness.'

I was spared an answer by the announcement of dinner, and we went down.

At table I was placed between Seymour and Dr Harrington, who was on Stewart's left, Lord Laneton being on his right. To my annoyance, my *vis-à-vis* was the Italian,

the very last person I would have wished to be there.

With so select a party the conversation was almost naturally pretty general, and it flowed first upon politics. What wonder, when all save the Count were Englishmen, three of whom at least were active and influential politicians, to wit, the Earl of Laneton, Falconbridge, and Tom Dacre? So the recent defeat of the Ministry and their appeal to the country was discussed and canvassed, and the pros and cons as to whether the new House, when met, would be any more favourable to the ministers than its predecessors.

'I would lay any bet,' said Tom, 'that so far from gaining a majority, they'll lose some of their minority.'

'So you say,' remarked Gus Seymour, laughing, 'and it is very likely; but still I should like to be heard on the other side, as the old lawyer said.'

'What is that, Gus?' said Dr John; 'let's have the story.'

'Why, sir, saving Dr Harrington's presence, it is of an old lawyer who, one Sunday in church, heard a very eloquent sermon, but in which the preacher spared no pains to paint the devil in his very blackest colours. "Capital speech," whispers the lawyer to his friend, "capital, but I should like to be heard on the other side." '

There was a general laugh at Seymour's story, and Claverhouse said, 'I think that "the other side" is never in

want of defence. It is a case in which there are many more defendants than plaintiffs.'

'That is too true,' said Dr Harrington. 'You lawyers,' he added, addressing Seymour, 'must, I think, be often placed in very painful positions. When you are retained for a criminal whom you believe guilty, how can you conscientiously defend him?'

'You forget, Doctor, that in English law and justice no man is *a criminal* until that of which he is accused is proved in open trial: the counsel has no right to judge his client guilty.'

'But a man cannot avoid or prevent secret conviction or opinion.'

'A legal mind can, by nature or habit,

hold itself unbiassed, and look at a case in a purely legal point,' answered Seymour.

'Well, but suppose the prisoner—and it has been done—confesses his crime to his counsel, of course he must then throw up his brief?'

'Certainly not! such a thing is rarely heard of. If the accused confesses his guilt to his counsel, he has still the right to be defended on his trial; the counsel may, with clear conscience,—nay, his plain duty is to see that his client has a fair trial, and is only condemned strictly under and according to law.'

'I understand you; but still the confession must place you in a painful and [illegible] position.'

'Yes, so far; and it is, I think, foolish of any prisoner to confess to his counsel if he means to plead Not guilty; his attorney is, of course, very different.'

'Very few confess,' remarked Lord Laneton, 'if statistics are to be believed.'

'No, my lord; but then statistics cannot well reach the private confessions that prisoners may make to their attorney.'

'I wonder,' said my brother, 'how many condemned men think that they have been fairly tried and sentenced?'

'Very few, of course.'

'And sometimes,' said Stewart, 'justice would demand a new trial; that is, where your English jurisprudence, much and rightly boasted, is far inferior to

foreign law: you want a *Cour de Cassation*,—an Appeal Court.'

'And have every criminal appealing,' said I.

'Point de tout, mon ami. It answers in France and Italy; why not England? By what right or justice is a man accused of crime denied the right which is granted in civil cases? If a man is nonsuited about his property, he can appeal; but if his life is in question, he has no second chance: if new evidence is found after condemnation, there is only a roundabout way open to him. The question has been mooted for a long time, but, as the English usually do, it will be, I suppose, talked of for twenty years before anything is done.'

'Ay,' laughed Cavagnac, 'the English look a long time before they leap.'

'And you foreigners,' retorted the Earl, 'leap before you look; ours, at least, is the safest way.'

'I don't know that; we might go faster with great advantage,' said Claverhouse; 'we have to endure an evil a long time before we get a remedy,—it runs through everything.'

'Ah well, well, my dear Claverhouse, we manage, in spite of all, to be the first nation in the world.'

Stewart laughed, and Tom Dacre said to me, 'You should stand for parliament, Wolfgang. I could get you in for a Conservative borough.'

'Too much trouble, Dacre; I could

never face it. As I told Claverhouse, I was born for idleness.'

I saw Dr Harrington glance at me and half shake his head, but he said nothing then. Afterwards, in the drawing-room, he came up to me with his coffee-cup in his hand.

'Mr Wolfgang, do you think any man is born for idleness?' he said in his grave, kind manner.

'It is a fair inference, sir, when Fortune has already spared the necessity for labour by giving fortune, position,—all, in fine, that men work for.'

'And what, then, of the men in this room—types of many—for what have they worked?'

'They? oh, for fame, because they

are so distressingly energetic or ambitious, or both, that they can't enjoy in content the goods that chance has given them. Well, they were born for working bees; I, and such as I, born to all that I want, and without the curse of a restless ambition and energy, were, I may consider, justly born to do nothing.'

'If, my young friend, you had been born an idiot, or so nearly one as to be almost as irresponsible, you might with some reason suppose that you were not meant for the active works of life, but you are intrusted not only with fortune, but with talents. Do you think they are meant to rust? No! God has unmistakably declared that every talent, every good, is but lent; a gift, given only on

condition that it is used. Christ's parable of the talents is a sufficiently plain command in itself.'

He paused, but I merely bowed, as if politely waiting for him to go on. Somehow, I dared not avow that I did not know to what parable he alluded.

He added, 'Look at your brother and Mr Dacre, with political talent; Mr Seymour, with legal talent; Claverhouse, gifted with such marked talent for Art; can you say that they would not be very wrong to enjoy their wealth in idleness, and let those talents rust?'

'I don't see why they should not, Doctor, save that, as I said, they are cursed with ambition.'

'Ambition is only a curse when men

make it so by giving it no limit; like all other gifts, it must be bounded, for St Paul says, "Be temperate in all things;" but it was given as a blessing: the want of it is a curse, if anything. God gives talents to be used, and to Him we are responsible for them.'

A soft voice, that made me start and shiver as if there had been poison in its musical cadence, said quietly, 'Monsieur, you are arguing at a disadvantage.'

'How, Count?'

'Because M. Von Wolfgang denies your authority and the responsibility you would impose.'

'How do you mean, Count? I don't quite take your jest,' said Dr Harrington.

'Ma foi, no jest, Doctor,—is it, M.

Casper? You are something very near an atheist.'

I could have struck him where he stood, but I bowed, answering Dr Harrington's look of grieved surprise.

'I certainly cannot satisfy my reason with what most men seem to believe so easily—credulously, it seems to me.'

Dr Harrington shook his gray head and looked down,—it seemed to me too deeply grieved to speak,—but the next moment he lifted his eyes and asked me suddenly, 'Were you ever at a death-bed?'

I never had been, for death was horrible to me,—a grim thing, which I avoided.

'No, sir; never.'

'It is a pity. You would hardly have remained an obdurate infidel, for the death-bed of a believer might have softened you, that of an atheist startled you at least to inquiry and search. I know nothing more terrible in my long experience than the death-bed of an atheist.'

He crossed the room, and I too turned away, glancing at Cavagnac. The ironical smile had left the delicate lip, the dark face was very grave, and he moved away silently to where Stewart stood for a minute apart, in a bow window. Two steps, and I was near the curtain of it. I saw him lay his hand on the sculptor's shoulder.

'Angelo, Angelo, which after all will

have the heaviest account,—Wolfgang, who scoffs at and denies the living God, or I, who, admitting Him on the lip, have denied Him in my life?'

The sculptor's answer was in Italian, and I left my place.

'Which will have the heaviest account?' What and who, then, was this so-called Guy de Cavagnac?

CHAPTER VI.

FLEUR-DE-MARIE ANSWERS TWO OR THREE QUESTIONS.

One gloomy, lowering evening the cameo-seller was returning homeward, weary and dispirited, less in body than mind, her dog at her side, walking with drooping head and gait, and when she paused at a crossing he would lick her hand.

The narrow street in which she lodged was but a short way from the Marble

Arch. As she entered it, she saw a tall dark figure walking slowly up and down, but the moment she drew nearer it came on swiftly, up to her.

'Monsieur—'

'Tiens toi, ma chère,' said Cavagnac, laying his hand on her shoulder, and gently turning her back; 'come with me a little way, if you are not too weary.'

Not weary now. His touch, his voice, his presence banished weariness, and she turned back with him into the Edgeware Road, across through the Marble Arch into the Park.

'I have been waiting for a long time for you, Anna-Marie,—fully an hour, I think.'

'J'en suis très fâchée, Monsieur.'

'N'importe. You have seen no more of Louis Bonheur, I suppose, or I should have seen you?'

'Nothing much, Monsieur; only this evening, as I was passing V—g's, in Regent-street, I saw him inside.'

'Was he alone?'

'I do not know exactly, Monsieur, for the shop was full; but I saw him address several remarks to M. Von Wolfgang, who was there also.'

'Ah, per Bacco!' said the detective, quick and suspicious directly. 'But he can have nothing to do with any plots. Did they have the air of confrères?'

'No; I fancied that M. Casper seemed surprised at being accosted: he eyed him as one does a new face and figure.'

'Had M. Casper no companion, male or female?'

'Not that I could perceive, Monsieur.'

'You tried to see, then, Anna?'

'Monsieur told me to take note of him whenever I could, because he is the Maestro's enemy.'

'You are an invaluable friend, caralina. Well, it is of him I want to speak, but you must answer me candidly.'

'If I can, M. Guy; if I am able.'

'You must be able; if not, you must find out,' he said, again laying his light, but now slightly imperative, hand on her shoulder. 'You still sit to Mademoiselle Lennox. Is her cousin often present?'

'Sì, he always comes in.'

'Which you don't like, eh? you are not in love with him?'

The Provençale half laughed, and coloured.

'Je ne l'aime point,' she said, very decidedly, 'but I like him to come in.'

'Ah, woman! to tease him. He hates sarcasm. Now tell me. You are a woman, and very quick. His cousin is very fond of him, isn't she?'

Cavagnac felt the girl start under his hand, but she answered,

'Yes, very fond of him; but only at the last sitting she told me that he was completely "son frère adopté."'

'Son frère, eh? I thought so,' muttered Guido between his teeth. 'Then he never shall have her, Anna mia.'

'Signor!'

'Was he in the room when she said that?'

'Yes; he did not like it.'

'Comment! by what do you judge?'

'I saw his face, Monsieur, and he left the room.'

'We men must be sharp indeed to escape such eyes as yours,' said the Italian, half smiling.

'M. Casper's face and his control of it are not like yours, Monsieur: the first is not difficult to read, the last rather readily gives way.'

'Dites moi, Anna; est ce qu'il aime sa belle cousine, comprenez vous bien?'

'Oui, Monsieur, as much as he can; he might have spared himself the trouble.'

Cavagnac drew a deep breath of relief.

'You think so, Anna? that she does not and never will love him?'

'I know it, Monsieur. It is impossible that she could love such a man: there can be no *rapport* between them. M. Casper has no soul.'

'Strange how that strikes all who come in contact with him,' said Guido di Schiara. 'Il Angelo used those very words to me: it is true,—Casper is soulless.'

He turned back, and added, 'You told me that the Signora Nina wanted to take you from this life, and you refused, because the money, you knew, was M. Casper's,—and I understand it.'

'He thought her romantic, high-flown,

absurd,' said Anna de Laval; 'he could not conceal it from me.'

'Yet he wished her to be pleasured, though it was an expensive Quixoticism?'

'Yes; he is free enough with his money, Monsieur.'

'He is. Anna, have you given me every reason for your refusal?'

The Provençale looked down, and her lips trembled.

'Monsieur, I promised the Maestro that I would go to him.'

'Yet you refused him, and obtained grace for two or three years?'

'Ah, mais, Monsieur,' said the pleading plaintive voice.

'I understand you perfectly, my

child; yet forgive me again. Anna, why not go now?'

'No, not now, not yet,' she said with a quick energetic utterance, very different to her habitual languid cadence.

'Anna-Marie, you have some reasons, —tell them me.'

'Monsieur, one is real, the other fancy or fanciful.'

'N'importe, m'amie, dites moi.'

'Les voici; M. Casper is a secret enemy of Il Angelo. You have bidden me keep him under a sort of surveillance, and I cannot do that so well in a higher as in this humble position: to serve the Signor I would give my life.'

'I know it, child. Oh, woman, woman, how cruelly we men misuse and

abuse your devotion! Anna, tell me your other reason.'

'I could not serve Monsieur any more,' said the Provençale, simply.

'Again, again,' he murmured. 'Anna, dismiss that, let it go for nothing; but the other keep to, for I tell you there is in me a dark presentiment,—the offspring of my great love for Angelo, that Wolfgang will be to him as an evil spirit, and that we who love the Maestro will be needed in a heavy hour of trouble. From the first moment I saw that German, I felt for him one of those strong antipathies in which I have never been mistaken. Now, here we are again at the Arch. Have you money?'

'Oui, Monsieur, merci.'

'Adio, caralina, à rivederlà.'

They parted, and each went a separate way.

Strange how Guido again missed the child's face and presence. There was something wanting now,—a void he dared not, would not analyze.

MANUSCRIPT XX.

FALSE STEPS.

Do you wonder why, in all my distracting doubts about Nina, I never made a confidante of my mother, never told her my secret and my misery, never asked her the questions which only a woman could answer, and which I longed, oh, how I longed! to ask a woman, one who was soft and womanly, unlike my mother?

One drawing morning Nina had gone out to see Theodora, and was not yet

back when her model came. Her lady's-maid came to ask me 'if the young girl was to wait?'

'Of course; let her go up to the boudoir. Miss Nina won't be long.'

And I went on smoking and reading for a few minutes, till it struck me that a chat with Anna de Laval would be preferable, and then I went up to the boudoir.

The cameo-seller was standing before a very fine steel engraving of the Last Judgment, but she turned as I entered.

'Bon jour, M. Casper.'

'Bon jour, Anna-Marie; how do you like that engraving?'

'It is very beautiful.'

'There is a "but" in your tone; what is it?'

'It is nothing like the original, Monsieur.'

'Of course not,—it lacks the colouring. Have *you* seen the painting?'

She bowed. 'The Signor Angelo got me an admittance.'

'More than I ever got, then,' said I.

'Yet you were in Rome, Monsieur?'

'Yes, only for a little while. I have yet to visit your bell' Italia. I travelled in France, America, and Germany, of which you know I am a native by blood.'

'I know,—Monsieur is a Tedesco.'

'For which you, as a good Italian, are bound to hate me.'

'Madonna mia! no, Signore,' said Anna, smiling.

I laughed at her deprecating manner,

and sat down in an easy chair; but as she moved again to the picture it struck me, 'ask her your question,' and I suddenly addressed her, but in a quiet, meditative way, as if it was a problem that had just occurred to me.

'Anna, when a woman loves, she cannot conceal every sign of it?'

She turned before she answered, and looked full at me, with those great, observant eyes, set under the fine, well-defined brows. It was a look, amused, surprised, and suspicious. It certainly was an odd question for a young man to ask so young a girl.

Then she answered, still watching me under her long lashes,

'It depends on her character, M.

Casper. A woman with a firm will and self-control can do so.'

'I don't believe it, Anna.'

She slightly shrugged her shoulders. The action said plainly, 'I don't care what you believe; it cannot alter fact.'

'Well, grant that an experienced woman could, a very young girl could not,' said I.

'Some might, and can.'

'Not from all eyes, Anna, or at all moments.'

'Eh bien! Monsieur honoured me by asking my opinion, and I answered his question.'

'Answer another, then, Fleur-de-Marie. Can a woman love and not know it, not be aware of it?'

'A *woman?* no, Monsieur, hardly; a young girl, yes,' said the Provençale, with a quiet decision that carried unwilling conviction.

'How is that possible, Anna? the heart must know when it puts forth affection.'

'Oui, Monsieur; but the heart can mistake itself.'

Did she know how she was stabbing me, and ruthlessly treading down my hopes? There was something in her dark eyes that made me more than fear she read me. Still I braved it out, and fell back on a new position. What a fool I was to make myself miserable about her words. What could she know, a girl, a child of fifteen? I forgot that she was

a Southern, and, besides, had for years struggled alone with the world, face to face with life, in a stern enough form.

'After all, Anna,' said I, 'what can you know about the heart, at your age? you are a child, and have yet to read it in yourself and others.'

'Madonna mia; in myself, perhaps, Signor, but not in others,' said the cameo-seller, with a quiet significance that startled me, and made me curse myself for saying a word to her.

'Vanity, vanity!' said I, trying to turn it off with a laugh, 'thy name is woman.'

'No, M. Casper, but I know my own sex better than you do. Test it,—ask the

same question of Madame votre mère, or, —Mademoiselle Nina.'

I leaned back in my chair, feeling staggered, feeling that this girl read me through. I had made a false step which it was impossible to retrieve, and I knew it. I could not even cover my defeat, and sat silent till Nina came in, throwing her hat one way and her burnoose another.

'A thousand pardons, Anna-Marie, but I see that Monsieur mon frère has been entertaining you. Have you been here long?'

'Only about ten minutes, Mademoiselle.'

'What made *you* unpunctual, Miss Nina?' said I.

'Oh, Theodora was chatty, and then

Mr Claverhouse came in with the boys whom he had in his studio sitting to him, and then we got talking about Rome and the *Sainte Eglise*, till I quite lost note of time. He gave me a message for you, too, Fleur-de-Marie, to tell you to go to him at ten to-morrow morning.'

'I am always at the Signor's service.'

'You are evidently a great favourite of his,' said I. 'What does he want you for, I wonder?'

Without arresting her pencil, Nina answered me.

'He is at work on a sculpture, a group of several figures, and he wants her for one of them; it is for this that he has taken Walter's children.'

'Oh, is it? And how does he keep them still?'

'He can do anything he likes, I believe, Cas; but he told me, laughingly, that Anna would manage them.'

'With her witcheries, eh?' said I, disguising under a light tone the pain and fiercely vengeful passion which Nina's speech stirred in me.

Yet could she love him and speak so frankly? impossible. But talk, think as I would, Anna's words haunted and troubled me,—'but the heart can mistake itself.'

I rose up and left the room. I was beginning to fear this Provençale as I did Guy de Cavagnac. I could not remain still, or settle to anything at home, so I ordered out my horse and rode into the

Park—as yet empty, my blood and brain at fever heat. A miserable-looking woman begged of me 'a penny, for the sake of the pretty lady that loved me,' and I flung her one with an oath, and a rough 'Go to the devil!'

She stood and cursed me,—'Be damned to you! there's a devil in you that will drag you down to hell, where ye belong!'

I put spur to my horse and dashed away furiously, nor did I slacken till I came to the end of Rotten Row; and then, as I turned back, I saw in the distance a coal-black horse and gigantic black dog approaching. I knew who the rider must be, for none but its master ever rode the fiery mare. I was on the point of

escaping into Knightsbridge, when a sudden thought, evil as the demon that was in me, struck me. I would tell him that which would at once raise up his sensitive honour, an impassable barrier between him and Nina. I turned back at a walk, and we met.

'Deserted your muses, Claverhouse?' was my salute, and I gave him my Judas hand. His, as usual, was cool to the touch, mine was burning hot, and he remarked it, glancing keenly in my face.

'How hot your hand is, Casper; are you ill?'

'No, indeed, Stewart; if so, it is from too much happiness. Congratulate me. I tell you, because you are one of the

secret ones, so only repeat it to one as secret as yourself.'

'What is your secret, then? One of your jests, Cas?'

'No, earnest. In a few months I shall have, I hope, to ask you to my wedding; my engagement has been long and secret, but the lady is old enough now.'

'Eh, bien! I congratulate you a thousand times.'

I was vexed.

'You don't believe me. You don't even ask her name, Stewart!'

'It is not for me to ask it,' he said, looking slightly surprised, 'or necessary for me to know, unless you choose to say.'

I dared not look at him. I could only cover my lie by assuming a grandiose air.

'Her name, Signor Maestro, is Nina Theodora Lennox.'

I glanced at him, but I could detect nó change. If his hand closed like a vice on the bridle, I could not perceive it; if every drop of blood receded to his heart, numbing it with its deadly chill, the dark colourless face, the steady lip and downcast eye, betrayed nothing. To me his had always been a most unreadable face, and now more than ever it was a sealed book, sealed so completely, that my spirit rose exultant, believing that I must have been mistaken.

Blind, blind again. I feel and know now that the blow had gone too straight and deep for outward sign. The heart was numbed.

At the end of the ride he left me. 'He must go back to work,' he said, 'to be ready for his Provençale, who was to come to-morrow,' and I laughed at him, calling him the slave of his Art. He paused a moment, and looking back, said, 'You, Casper, are the slave of your atheism and your pleasure!'

Shall I never get his face out of my memory, or his voice out of my ears?

CHAPTER VII.

THE COUNT UNMASKS AN ENEMY.

GUIDO DI SCHIARA came one morning to the sculptor's house, and met Luigi in the hall.

'The Signor Angelo is in his studio, I suppose?' he said, pausing with his foot on the stair.

'Sì, Signore, but you can of course go up. Only last night he remarked to me, "Amico, it is some days since we have

seen the Signor Guido." You will be welcome.'

'Is he alone?'

'Yes.'

'Then I will go up. Has the fanciulla Anna been here to-day?'

'No, Signor; yesterday the Maestro had her here sitting to him.'

The Count ascended the stairs with his usual light, noiseless tread, traversed the gallery and ante-room, and quietly entered the studio, so quietly, that the sculptor did not perceive him.

There he sat, motionless, the chisel still in his hand, the slight figure bending forwards, the beautiful head bowed on the marble, at which he had been working, so still and motionless, that he hardly seemed

to breathe and live, till Guido's hand, light and tender as a woman's, was laid on his shoulder, and then he started and lifted a dark haggard face.

'Angelo, amico mio, what is wrong? there are no secrets between us two.'

Stewart rose up, putting him off.

'Caro mio, I was thinking, idling, instead of working; solitary thought is most often sorrowful. I am glad you have come in. See, the marble is assuming shape; here is a drawing of what it will be. I want you to sit to me for this figure, holding up the child.'

'I am always at your service; but has your memory played you false?'

'How,—what do you mean?'

'It placed before you, as by inspira-

tion, the model for the most perfect figure of your most perfect work,' said Cavagnac, watching him quietly.

The sculptor took up his chisel, and, chipping lightly at the marble, answered,

'I had rather have the model before me. Memory is a fickle nymph, and might not give me details.'

'She gave you every trait before, though, with wonderful faith; but then that *was* nothing less than an inspiration.'

Claverhouse made no answer, but Guido saw that he paused for a moment to steady his hand, and then he worked on in silence. He watched the chips flying off for a few minutes, and then said carelessly,

'By the way, have you seen Wolfgang lately?'

'Yes, three days ago, out riding in the Park.'

'I wonder he does not marry. *He* would not shrink from going to an altar and through a service at which he scoffs, would he?'

'No.'

It was a very quiet 'no,' and Cavagnac looked at him pained and troubled.

'Car' amico mio, you are trying me deeply. You cannot put me off and deceive me, as you could one who loves you less. Some heavy sorrow has fallen on you; let me share it.'

The sculptor flung down his chisel,

and turned from the still marble to the living friend.

'Why should you? you have your own troubles, without sharing mine.'

'For what else do I call you friend? for what else did the same—Angelo, do you think I cannot read *you?* why did you remember that child for twelve years? why are you, who have seen the noblest and most lovely, still wifeless, save for the memory of one young English girl, as high-souled and noble as she is beautiful? you love her,—you have loved her from a boy.'

'Guido, Guido, hush! that is past; unless it was a most foul lie, she will soon be Wolfgang's wife.'

Guido di Schiara started, and a dark flush rose to his bronzed face.

'That atheist German!' he almost broke out, 'that soulless, useless pleasure-seeker, who has flung his freshness to the worthless of womankind, and buried his talents! who cannot know a pure and holy love; whose wife will be to him little more than his mistress! it is impossible. Who dared to assert it?'

'Casper himself; he has been long engaged to her, he said.'

'Angelo, is it possible or likely that Nina Lennox should love or marry such a man?'

'No,' said Stewart, steadily, 'not likely, but still possible; and how could I, how can I disbelieve such deliberate words? how charge Casper with such a lie, so base, and beneath him? with all

his faults, he was never mean, never forgot that he was a gentleman; in his wildest passion or resentment—and he is both jealous and revengeful—he never disgraced the name of St Leger Wolfgang.'

'I believe to my soul, then, that he has disgraced it now by as base a lie, told with as base a motive as any one could wish,' said Cavagnac. 'I have watched him and probed him, I think, to the bottom.'

'So have I, Guido, and found in him something inexpressibly antagonistic, something nameless, but which I feel with painful sensitiveness, and shrink from as from a subtle and deadly poison.'

'It *is* a deadly poison. Shall I give it its right name, its hideous deformity?'

'Yes.'

'You named it just now,—jealousy.'

The sculptor turned and fixed his large gray eyes full on Cavagnac.

'Ay, look if you will, but I am right. It is true, though you only felt it, while I saw it; because you do not know your own powers, and how unconsciously you charm all who come within your reach; you cannot help it. You fascinate Wolfgang against his will, but he hates you for the very power which he cannot resist. Stay, hear me out. He is jealous of your genius, of your superiority, of your fame, which he has neither energy nor ambition to emulate; and, lastly, more lately, he fears you as a rival—for, after his fashion, he does love his cousin—and therefore has

told you this lie; you see his motive?'

'Plainly; if she is in truth his betrothed wife, I, knowing that, must in honour draw back.'

'C'est ça. Of all the men around her, his vanity makes him hold himself the superior—above *their* rivalry; but you, he feels irresistibly, are his superior, and the sense of his inferiority makes his jealous fear fix on you as his only possible rival. For Miss Lennox, she looks on him as her brother; she told Anna-Marie that he was "son frère adopté." Angelo, he has played a false game and made a false step. Your dream is not broken,—Nina Lennox may yet be your wife.'

'Guido, you are indeed a faithful

friend,' said the sculptor, clasping the Italian's hand in his own.

Guido di Schiara bowed his face and kissed those hands.

MANUSCRIPT XXI.

LOST.

'Day after day, day after day,
No life, nor breath, nor motion.'

So it was with me. It seemed as if my life had flowed up to a dam, and stopped there stagnant; it seemed a crisis. There was no going back, no unsaying words spoken, even if I would; I had told a deliberate and unvarnished lie, of which I must soon stand convicted, unless I made it the truth. I, St Leger Wolfgang, convicted of a lie? Never! But it added another item of

hatred against the man who had forced me to it. If I could have swept him from my path, blotted him out of the page of my life, I would have done it. I dreaded his personal influence, I feared to face him, to meet the clear steadfast eyes, to hear the soft musical voice, and I avoided him for days; till at last, coming one night out of the Opera House, I suddenly found myself face to face with him and Cavagnac, slowly making their way through the crowd. The Count slightly lifted his hat, foreign fashion, with his mocking smile, and, 'Comment vous portez vous, Monsieur?' But Stewart, though he passed me close enough to speak, only bowed; and I saw his face in the lamp light, that it was stern and grave. I felt

stunned. My eyes mechanically followed the tall figure till it disappeared, but I was conscious only of the dread that he suspected my lie, and even in the suspicion of it despised me.

Despised! and by *that* man, whose good opinion, whose affection, even, I had always coveted and valued so high. I was maddened at the thought; furious to see how much I cared, how impossible it was to free myself from his silent influence. I felt as if an invisible chain were gathering round me, and I fled home to my chamber to bed, hoping for oblivion in sleep; but sleep came not. Whether in light or darkness, whether I shut or opened my eyes, I saw that beautiful face, those deep sorrowful eyes ever

looking at me with that steady unearthly light which had always to me something weird; and now, in the silent watches of the mysterious night, all the wild legends and traditions of my fatherland crowded into my excited brain, and I buried my face in my pillow. Was he, indeed, human, like myself? or,—this man, with his noiseless step, his wondrous voice and beauty and strange charm, such as I had never seen before, or since, must have a secret spring, whose source was—ah, whence? I dared not, could not find an answer in all my sceptic visionary lore.

I slept at last, heavily, and it was Nina's rich mellow voice that awoke me.

'Cas, you dear lazy boy,' she said through the door, 'have you a mind to

emulate the Seven Sleepers? it is long past ten, and Aunt Georgine has actually gone out shopping, or something.'

'Ma foi! send me up some coffee, and I'll join you soon, Nina.'

She answered, 'Very well, Mr Lazybones,' and went away laughing.

I would have avoided her, for I dared not trust myself; and presently I stole down to my own study, but she heard me, for she came in almost immediately, and stopped abruptly, aghast, as well she might be, at my haggard face.

'Casper, my dear old boy, are you ill?'

I turned from her, and threw myself in my easy chair.

'I had a bad night,—I could not sleep; that is all.'

'It is not all; you look—I don't know what like, for I never saw you look so before,' she said, kneeling down before me, and winding her fingers round my hand. 'Won't you tell me what is wrong, mon frère?'

All self-control fled before that horrible word; all thought, all calmness vanished before the ungovernable tempest that swept over me; and, hardly knowing what I did, I clasped my arms about her with wild passionate words—

'Not that, Nina, or you will drive me mad. I cannot bear it any longer. Brother! when my very heart is on fire, when I love you as no brother ever loved! hate me sooner, that I may win your love; have pity, and give me hope and life, or—'

'Casper!'

She flung off my hold as if it had been a child's, and sprang erect with such a cry as curdled my very blood; with such a face as made my head creep, as if ice-cold water had been poured slowly over it; such horror, and terror, and grief were in that nightmare face, as if I had been in very truth her brother.

'Nina! Nina!'

'Don't touch me!' She put out her hands, with an almost frantic gesture, speaking in a low, frightened voice. 'Let me pass, let me pass, for God's sake.'

But I threw myself between her and the door. I was desperate, and spoke with fierce desperation—

'No, by the God you invoke! only as

my promised wife you leave me. I love you, I cannot live without you; I have sworn that you shall be mine, and that oath I will keep.'

She interrupted me. Her face changed; as a scroll that is rolled away, the girlishness left it, and she stood a woman in the grand beauty of her dignified womanhood. I had roughly broken a dream, and closed for ever the page of her girlhood.

'Casper, Casper, you have, indeed, taught me a fearful lesson. Hush! hear me now a few words. I have loved you as a brother, God knows how dearly, but even then, from the hour I entered your house, there was a shadow between us, a want of something that I have since

defined,—that which has made you an atheist and a scoffer.'

'Nina, O Nina, have mercy! Be my wife, and I will believe all you wish.'

'Belief is not of man, but of God,—not of the creature, but the Creator,' she answered. 'How can you, how dare you profane the holiness of marriage? to you it is a mockery.'

'Don't speak like that, Nina. If that is the only bar—'

'It is not. I have loved you as a most dear brother, as much as if the same mother had borne us, and that cannot change its character; but now, now,—O Casper, Casper, why have you flung it back on me, and broken my idol?' She broke down utterly, and covered her face,

weeping passionately. 'You have left me nothing,—nothing!'

'Is my love, my devotion nothing? Is it nothing that I plead for your love as the only thing I value in life? that I must have it—'

'No,—never.'

The words fell from her white lips slow, deliberate, irrevocable: her heart never would be mine, but her hand should, —yes, should be. The thought that in truth a rival stood between us roused my darkest passion and fury, and I grasped her slender wrist with cruel force.

'Nina, mine alone you shall be; no rival shall stand between me and my love. I have sworn it, and thus I seal it.'

I clasped her in my arms, and stooped

to kiss her lips, but with desperate, almost superhuman strength she flung off my grasp, sprang past me, and fled.

I stood like one stunned,—stunned more by the force of the fierce passions that seemed consuming me than by her escape. How long I stood I know not, but I was roused by the shutting of the street-door, and, starting forwards, I hurried out into the hall.

'Who was that who went out?' I asked a servant.

'I think, sir, it was Mrs Mansell' (the housekeeper).

'Oh, was it? Where is Miss Nina?'

'Up-stairs, sir, I believe.'

I re-entered the study, rang for my groom, ordered my horse, and rode out.

I rode wildly, recklessly, mercilessly, for the demon was in me, and urged me on.

It was hours before I returned, and then my mother met me in the hall.

'What! alone, my dear? I thought Nina was with you; but she must have gone to see Theodora.'

I staggered back, gasping, 'Nina not here, mother?'

She drew me into a room near, and shut the door.

'What has happened, Casper? tell me quickly. Suspense kills me; your face sickens me with dread.'

I told her in a few wild, hurried words what had passed; she almost wrung her hands.

'What have you done, Casper? You

were too violent; you startled the child and frightened her. She has gone to Walter. I will bring her back.'

But a sudden thought, a sudden terror seized me, and I followed her.

'Mother, come here; look in her room,—come, come!'

She caught my alarm, and hurried up to Nina's room. At a glance it seemed as usual; but my mother advancing, called me in, in a terrified whisper.

'Look, look! she is gone. Fly to Walter, and see if she is indeed there. Look here.'

One drawer stood open and empty. There was also a small cabinet in which she kept her money and jewels,—it stood open and empty. I saw no more, but

hurried away to my brother's. I must be calm now, and with a strong effort I asked the footman quietly for either his master or mistress.

'They have been out all day, sir.'

'Oh; when will they and Miss Nina be back?'

'Miss Nina, sir! she wasn't with them. She hasn't been here to-day at all.'

'Are you sure, Richard?'

'Positive, sir.'

'Well, if she should call in, Richard, tell her to hasten home, as an old school-friend of hers is waiting to see her.'

'I will, sir.'

I turned back into the street, and stood for a minute.

Can you imagine what I felt? my

heart, my life, seemed to have stopped; sick, dizzy with terror for my work,—yes, mine alone.

Where was Nina?

Then I called a hansom, and drove straight to F—'s private inquiry office, where I saw F— himself, and gave him every information and authority to advertise, or do anything to find the lady; only secretly, quietly, to avoid scandal. I told him that I cared not what it cost me, and asked what I should do.

'Nothing, sir; only wait, and leave all to me. Send me the lady's photograph, —that is all.'

I went home to my mother, and told her what I had done; and then,—then, unable to remain still a moment, I went

out; away to seek anything, to distract thought, where I knew well.

I entered ——'s near the Haymarket, but I might not have played if I had not met a stranger, a Frenchman, whom I had seen at V—'s once before: and this man tempted me on, and I played wildly and deeply, as I had not played since my youth; but, try as I would, thought would not be stifled. It was ever before me in letters of fire—Where is Nina? Where is Nina?

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT POCKET REVOLVER.

THE Count de Cavagnac sat reading the *Times*, not in dressing-gown and slippers, for he never troubled such articles; but dressed, ready at any moment to be on the move, ever on the alert. So there he sat by the open window, smoking an elegant silver-mounted meerschaum, and reading, when Auguste's quiet face was put in, and Auguste's quiet voice announced,

'Mademoiselle Anna. Will Monsieur see her?'

'Yes, certainly, Auguste.'

The dark eyes lighted up suddenly, and he left the window directly, meeting the cameo-seller as she came in.

'Always welcome, caralina; you are never in the way.'

The girl's lip quivered, and her eyes dropped before his, but she said in her usual quiet manner,

'Merci, Monsieur. I came so early, because, when I have any information, you like it directly.'

'Right; is it important, Anna?'

'I do not know, M. le Comte; you must judge of that. I am but the servant, you the master.'

'Well, well; sit down there, my child, and tell me your story in detail,—there is time on hand.'

Time? yes, time to look on the face, to listen to the voice that were fast growing into his very heart, playing the holiest, sweetest music that God has given to man.

'Tell me, Anna,' he said.

'Monsieur, it is not long. Last night I sang in the chorus at the opera, and that made me out late.'

'Anna! Anna!'

'Monsieur, I had Corsare.'

'My child, can even his faithful guardianship shelter you from the bold gaze and insulting word of the *roué?*'

The Provençale's head drooped, and

for a moment the crimson flushed over her brow, but it faded instantly; and she answered,

'I am used to that, Monsieur.'

The man crushed a heavy sigh, and merely bade her 'Go on with her story.'

'Eh bien, Monsieur. I was walking slowly along, when two men came out of ——'s. You know it?'

'Yes, well.'

'They were before me. I knew them both, directly, and followed them. One was Louis Bonheur, and the other M. St Leger Wolfgang.'

'What the devil were they doing in company again?'

'They had met in the salon-de-jeu. I followed them to the Quadrant, and M.

Bonheur was talking constantly till they came to that tall archway that leads down a court.'

'I know it.'

'He drew M. Wolfgang just through it, and then I came close enough, under the shadow of a corner, to overhear them, as well as see, by peeping cautiously round. M. Wolfgang looked haggard, almost wild, I thought. Bonheur said laughing, "Fortune was fickle to-night, and smiled and frowned on you twenty times."

'"Curse her, and you too!" You see M. Casper forgot his politeness. "Why do you stop me here?"

'Bonheur said, "To show him a pretty little toy he had bought, and did not like. He would sell it for two pounds;" and out

he took the pocket revolver I saw him buy at Hurne's.'

Cavagnac leaned forwards, deeply attentive, as Anna-Marie went on—

'M. Wolfgang examined it slightingly at first. "He did not want it," he said, and then suddenly changed—"Yes, I'll buy it; it might be useful some way or another, only it has got a mark—letters on it." "Oh, ce n'est rien, ce n'est rien, Monsieur—it will scratch off." M. Casper seemed too excited to think much of anything, and he took the revolver, paying two sovereigns for it. "The only gold I have about me," he said, "and they happen to be Australian sovereigns,—richer, purer gold than ours, M. Gavannier."'

'Gavannier, Anna? is that what he

had called himself to Wolfgang? that is valuable.'

'Oui, Monsieur; they stood talking a little, and then I gathered that they only met for the second time (the first was at V—'s) that night in the salon-de-jeu, that M. Casper had lost to Bonheur; and by his eagerness about the revolver, it seemed to me that Louis Bonheur was determined to get rid of too marked a weapon.'

'Which marked weapon,' added Guido di Schiara slowly, 'is now in the possession of Casper Von Wolfgang. Anna,' he said with a sudden passionate force that startled her, 'I would to God I had that man abroad! I would call him out and kill him.'

The cameo-seller made no answer, and

Cavagnac paced to and fro for a few minutes, till at last he stopped, and said in his usual quiet manner and softened voice, 'You have done well, as you always do. I wanted but the name Bonheur went by here to unearth him and his sanguinary plots, and you have fitted in that link.'

The Provençale rose to leave, with her gentle 'Au revoir, Monsieur.'

He took both her hands, and his lips half-opened, as if he would have spoken, but instead he suddenly stooped, and pressed his lips to the slender hands he held.

'God keep thee, my child.'

She went on her weary way, lightened by the memory of his face and voice.

And he covered his face and asked

himself, 'Can it be so? has this child crept into my heart, bearded man as I am, seared by the world?'

Ah, Guido di Schiara, is it the first time or will it be the last that a child has crept into the very heart's core of a seared, bearded man?

* * * *

Rather later in the morning, somewhere about ten o'clock, the Provençale went to the sculptor's house to sit to him, and just as she rang Cavagnac himself came up.

'Ah again, mon enfant,' he said, as they entered the house. 'Is Mr Claverhouse at home, Grey?'

'He has just come in, sir, and gone straight up to his studio.'

'Come, then, Anna-Marie, he is waiting for you; we will go up.'

Anna de Laval followed him up to the ante-room, and there paused, while Guy knocked lightly at the studio door.

'Who is there?'

'Guido.'

'You may come in, amico.'

Cavagnac started. His ear told him unerringly that there was something wrong. He could read the least change of inflexion in that voice.

'Wait here, Anna,' he said, and went in. One glance at the sculptor's stern and troubled face was enough.

'Angelo, what has happened?'

'What has *not* happened?' said Stew-

art sternly. 'Nina Lennox is gone, and it is Casper's work.'

'Gone, gone? Ah, I can guess. The false, dishonoured liar! tell me all.'

'It is soon told. I called this morning at Lady Falconbridge's to fetch Alec for a ride, and I saw her looking so ill, that I asked anxiously if anything was wrong. She burst into tears, and told me the truth, as Mrs Wolfgang had herself confessed it to her. Yesterday Casper spoke to his cousin. How violently and shamefully, you can guess, from the fact that she instantly left the house.'

'Gran' Dio! that child! Had she money? why did not she fly to Lady Falconbridge?'

'She was excited, and naturally feared

that her aunt, her guardian, would reclaim her. O Nina, Nina! and I not near, to save and shelter you from such unmanly cowardice! What will become of her, so young, inexperienced, and beautiful? Guido, it is almost more than I can bear. I dare not think.'

'What has been done?'

'They have employed F—, and I went myself to the *Times* office, to put in an advertisement for Lady Falconbridge, so couched, and in Italian, that only Nina will detect the meaning. I must find her; I cannot remain inactive.'

'No, nor I,—it is my trade; but, caro mio, had she money?'

'Yes, and jewelry; and in that precaution there is some slight relief. She is

young, but I know her well; and while she has money there is not such cause for immediate fear; but she, so cherished, alone, broken-hearted—Oh, Guido amico, I would give all I possess to have her back in safety.'

'Sophistry is no use,' said Guido, smiling sadly; 'the heart speaks too loud; it will be heard. But we have a most efficient detective at hand,—one I have tested,—Anna-Marie. She read Wolfgang long ago, and may be trusted.'

'I know; she has a sweet, tender woman's heart, and her wandering life will make it easier and more likely for her to find Nina. With so many searching for her she can scarcely escape. Is Anna here?'

'Yes. Anna—venez ici, mon enfant.'

The girl came in directly, and as she saluted her dark eye went from one face to the other with a quick comprehensive glance, but she merely said, softly—

'Messieurs, je suis à vos ordres.'

In a few words the sculptor told her of Nina's flight, and what he wanted of her: he gave no explanation of his interest in it, for he read in her tender, gentle eyes that she needed none. She would have been less than woman if she had.

MANUSCRIPT XXII.

TEMPEST.

Oh, those days of torture! they are burned into my memory as with fire. It was not so much the anxiety, for I knew that Nina was no country girl, open to every snare and deception. She had read much, and had mixed with the world, and observed it; she had been bred all her life in cities, and was not at all likely to fall into any danger, as long, at any rate, as she had money. But it was the storm

and strife of my own fierce passion that wore me out, and seemed to be killing me by inches.

Why could her heart never be given to me unless it was no longer free? It was not free. I knew it, felt it, and cursed the man who had dared to come between me and my love; cursed his beauty and his genius, cursed the very hour he was born, and the breath that gave him life!

Once I entered the music-room, where stood his wonderful work in all its grandly still and solemn beauty. Did its holy calm, its lifeless life still the tempest? No, it roused it to unspeakable blind fury; the silent marble had a thousand tongues, for in every line, every grain of it, his great love was graven.

The demon of destruction seized me in its savage impulse, and I caught up from the mantel-piece a large Indian tomahawk which I had brought from the States. It had in other hands killed savages; my hands, more savage still, would have destroyed Art. I stood before it, and *lifted* the weapon for the blow. How *perfectly* the master hand had chiselled every line! how faultless every figure! The grandeur of the whole conception struck me with a sudden awe, and sent the whirlwind of passions back on my heart; the mightiness of genius stilled the demon, and my arm fell.

'Fool that I am,' I muttered fiercely, 'to shrink before dead marble!'

Was it dead? Is anything dead on which Intellect has imprinted itself?

A second and a third time I raised my hand, and again it fell. A fourth time I swung high the murderous weapon, desperate, determined. It was descending. One second more, and the beautiful sculpture would have been defaced for ever, when a hand caught my arm, and wrenched the tomahawk from my grasp.

'Are you mad?' said my mother sternly, 'or is it a Vandal barbarian of yore in the form of my son?'

I turned from her without a word, and went out. Hours after, when I returned, the sculpture was gone.

'I have sent it back to the sculptor,' said my mother. 'I see all now, my son. It is better there than here.'

Better, indeed!

Day after day passed without any news, without F— obtaining the least clue or trace of the fugitive; and he could not issue advertisements describing her, as I had put my positive veto upon the least publicity. I left to my mother's smooth tongue and woman's wit to account for Nina's absence to acquaintance and friends.

Stewart Claverhouse I avoided like poison. How could I face the man before whom I stood convicted of a disgraceful lie and unmanly violence to a woman? He must know all, for Theodora had told him,—she said so. 'He was their friend,' she told me quietly; 'he had asked her what grieved her, and she would not tell that man a lie for anything.'

Did she know that I had done so? I

avoided them all, for I could not bear their silent reproach. My mother alone took my part, and blamed Nina. 'The child,' she said, 'was impetuous and ungrateful to behave so to those who had loved and cherished her; but she will return, or at least we shall find her, and then, Casper, you will be no son of mine if you tamely resign her to this brilliant rival.'

'Resign her? no, never, never, to mortal man! She shall be my wife, or—'

I stopped, for I felt choking, stifling as if for want of air, and I left the room.

Oh, if there had only been one softening womanly word or influence! Oh, if I had only had such a mother as Cora Claverhouse must have been!

CHAPTER IX.

THE FUGITIVE.

THE shipwrecked seaman cast on *some* narrow rock or raft, with the wide ocean bounding his gaze on every side, could hardly be more alone than Nina Lennox, when she turned that bright summer morning from what had once been her home, too excited to feel anything definitely yet, save the wild impulse to fly, to hide herself away. Her first natural idea had been to seek Theodora's pro-

tection, but instantly there came a thought that she would be reclaimed by Madame Von Wolfgang, her guardian. She did not know the law, and that her guardian could not reclaim her against her will, without the intervention of law.

She paused at the end of the street, to calm and collect herself, for heart and brain were dizzy. Pursuit would be speedy, and it must be baffled. Nina knew well—what beautiful woman does not?—that she was too marked and striking to escape notice easily, if at all. She drew her veil close, wrapped her mantle about her, and walked into Oxford-street, where she called a cab, and bade the man drive her to the London Bridge Terminus. Not that she had any intention of leaving

London; but if her pursuers should find out the cabman, they would be thrown off the scent. She did not know that one of those pursuers was a man whose whole life and very nature were detective, to whom failure was hardly known, to whom all her ruses would be as daylight, and whose search it was scarcely possible she could ultimately elude.

It was still little over noon when the fugitive entered the busy bustling Terminus, and sat down in the first-class waiting-room, to think where she should seek a safe lodging; but she soon rose, and went to the ticket window to change some notes.

The clerk thought she wanted a ticket, and said,

'Where to, ma'am? — train's just going.'

'Thank you, I am not going by train. Can you oblige me by change for two five pound notes?'

'With pleasure, ma'am.' He glanced at the veiled lady, struck by the sweet musical voice, and gave her the change, following her with his glance, as she went away, not towards the platform, but through the entrance. He noticed her dress, too, as some men will: it was so handsome, and in such perfect keeping with her high-bred appearance. She wore a black dress, of rich moire-antique, and a dark, costly India shawl, the most graceful thing which an elegant woman can wear.

Nina left London Bridge, and made her way towards St Paul's, keeping on foot, for she knew well enough that she might be traced if she took either a cab or omnibus; and as she walked along, she revolved the best measures for concealment. It would look strange enough to excite suspicion wherever she sought lodging, to see so young and handsomely-dressed a lady quite alone; and Nina knew it. She could not call herself a teacher of any sort, for her dress and air would belie her. It struck her suddenly to call herself a foreigner, just arrived in London, and for the rest they might think what they liked; while she had money and could pay, she was safe.

She passed St Paul's, on to Ludgate

Hill, and then nature began to give way. She entered a baker's shop and took some refreshment, not, though, forgetting the character she had determined to assume; and as she paid for what she had had, she asked, with a strong and well-feigned French accent,

'Madame, can you tell me where I shall find a good lodging? I am only this day arrived here.'

'How many is it for, ma'am?'

'Only myself. One room is enough; and, being a stranger, of course I shall pay in advance.'

The woman's face cleared.

'Well, ma'am, I *have* a room that I sometimes let, but it's only got a sofa bed.'

'No matter, Madame; let me see it.'

The woman led the way up-stairs to a front room on the third floor, very well furnished of its kind, though to Nina, used to so elegant a home, it looked very humble indeed. Still it was a roof,—a place to hide her weary head, and she took it, arranged with Mrs Harper to act housekeeper for her, and paid a week in advance, giving her name as Mademoiselle de Valère. Her luggage, she said, had not yet passed the Customs. She had all she needed in the travelling bag she carried, which was true for the time.

But now she was safe. When she found herself alone, the passion and excitement which had kept her up gave way, and she wept such deep silent weep-

ing as shook her from head to foot; and when the excitement and passionate tears had passed, they gave place to an intense depression and prostration. Now she could feel the full effects of the impetuous step she had taken.

She stood alone, — the past a closed page of her life, the future a dark hopeless chaos. Casper had rudely, indeed, broken her dream and flung her affection back on herself; every sisterly caress, every frank innocent kiss came back now like stinging poison. He had done more: he had told her that she should be his wife in spite of any rival, and those words had opened the woman's eyes to the music-book of her own heart,—wondrously beautiful music from the hand of a great

Composer, whose mighty genius cannot fall short of perfection.

And in the silence and solitude she read the music that had been written there so many years: she saw the face round which, unconsciously, every thought and hope and aspiration of her young life had twined 'as the vine weaves her tendrils.'

O Nina, Nina! womanlike, thou hast deified a being beautiful indeed, but mortal as thyself, and given thy love, thy whole soul, to an earthly idol, forgetting that thy God is a jealous God, who will not give His glory to another!

CHAPTER X.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL.

NEITHER Stewart Claverhouse nor Guy de Cavagnac were men to let the grass grow under their feet. The first thing to learn was a minute description of the fugitive's dress, and this the sculptor easily obtained from Lady Falconbridge without in the least raising any suspicion. He had only to call, put a few incidental questions, and Theodora told him every detail.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

house. 'She would know or feel that in the former she would attract notice: few omnibus passengers are so *distingué*, either in dress or appearance, as Nina Lennox.'

'Vous avez raison, mon ami. What says Anna's woman's wit?'

'Oh, Monsieur, Mademoiselle s'est promenée en cabriolet, sans doute.'

'Bien—so I think; and she will have been set down in some crowded part. We must find out the said cab by patient inquiry, and with three of us we shall find the right one. Stewart, if the Signora had been more calm she would never have put on a costly India shawl.'

'Guido, Anna, offer what rewards you choose for information, only, for Nina's sake, give Anna's address.'

'Certainly. Allons donc; we begin with the cab-stands nearest to —— street.'

The three parted company at the end of the square, and took each a different direction.

Days passed by in futile search, and a week had gone by when one morning the cameo-seller came to Cavagnac.

'Monsieur, I have been to the Maestro, but he was out, so I came here. I have found the cabman.'

'Ah, Sainte Vierge! then I have the trail. Where did he drive her to, Anna?'

'To London Bridge Terminus, Monsieur.'

The Count rose and took his hat.

'Diable! got into the crowd,' said he. 'N'importe, I am on the scent now, and

shall not lose it. Anna, you must come with me to London Bridge; leave Corsare and the cameo box here with Auguste, and throw your mantle over that pretty Roman dress, while I write a line for the Signor.'

'Monsieur, I left a note for him with le bon Monsieur son oncle, telling him what I had done.'

'Ma chère enfant, you never forget anything; come.'

She followed him from the house, but keeping a little distance behind him till he called a cab, and bade the man drive fast to London Bridge.

The whole way Cavagnac sat silent, and his young companion saw that his dark face was more anxious and grave

than usual. She little thought that she, the poor wandering cameo-seller, was the object of his thoughts.

At the Terminus he dismissed the cab, and entered the Station.

'Now, Anna, I shall go first to the ticket-clerk, for he may have changed money or notes for her.' And he suited the action to the word, though he had to wait till the tickets had been given for a train just going off to Brighton. Then he astonished the clerk—the very one Nina had seen—by asking,

'Were you here last Wednesday on duty between twelve and one, or two?'

'Yes, sir, certainly.'

'Do you remember giving a ticket to any passenger answering this description:

a lady, very young, rather tall, and of distinguished appearance, wearing a dark gray silk bonnet, and thick black lace veil, a black moire-antique dress, and very handsome India shawl; wearing also a gold watch, long chain, and gold cross hanging to it, and she carried a black travelling bag? Her voice, too, was peculiarly soft and musical.'

The description tallied exactly.

'Yes, sir; I did see and notice such a lady, but she did not take a ticket, only changed two £5 notes, and went out that way again.'

'She said nothing, I suppose, about her route?'

'Oh no, sir; not a word, only that she wasn't going down the line.'

'Thank you.' He turned away, and said in Italian to Anna-Marie, 'I thought so; she is in London, and now to trace her.'

'Comment, Monsieur? it would be easier in Paris, but here chacun s'occupe de ses affaires, and every one is so horribly free—n'est ce pas?'

'Tant mieux, n'est ce pas?' retorted Cavagnac, half-laughing, as they went out. 'We must ask the policemen who were on duty at the time in the neighbourhood, all the tramps, and itinerant venders, et cetera; any one likely or unlikely to have noticed her. Some of the little Arabs may have offered to carry her bag. So now we part company, and meet here in an hour and a half.' They se-

parated, to pursue their weary and certainly somewhat hopeless work—to Anna entirely fruitless. She met Cavagnac at the rendezvous with a white, weary face, almost with tears of vexation in her dark eyes.

'No news, Anna?'

'No, Monsieur.'

'I have. She asked a policeman the shortest way to St Paul's, so there we must go.'

Again he called a cab, and they were driven to St Paul's Churchyard, where they got out.

'By the Mass!' said the Count, half-laughing, 'it is the strangest chase I ever had.'

'Que faire?' said the child, looking

up in his face. 'Monsieur is at fault.'

'Not I, car' amica mia. She walked here, and by the time she reached the spot her excitement will have given place to faintness or dizziness, and she will have entered the first confectioner's or baker's that she saw. There are not many all down Ludgate Hill and Fleet-street, so we can beat them all,—I this side, you on the other; we can signal each other. Allez donc, petite.'

She obeyed, and crossed to the other side, that on which, further down, Mrs Harper's shop was situated. Each went unsuccessfully into two or three, and Anna was close to Mrs Harper's, when, looking across for her companion, she saw him stop and beckon to her.

The girl crossed the road directly, in spite of the crowd of vehicles, and gained his side. He drew her under one of the many archways leading into courts with which Ludgate Hill abounds.

'You were going to try that shop, were you not, Anna?'

'Yes.'

'Right; you would have found her. As I paused, my eye scanned the houses, and at a window on the second floor I caught a glimpse of a face that I am positive was hers. She is there; but for her sake in every way, only you must appear. Tell her, at present, that you alone have tracked her, and try to make her go to Lady Falconbridge. Here is money, in

case you or she need it. I leave all to you, trust all to you.'

'Merci mille fois, will Monsieur wait here?'

'No; all is safe in your hands. I will go to the Maestro, and report our success.'

'Et la pauvre Madame Falconbridge?'

'No; not till I see or hear from you.'

'Eh bien, and M. Casper shall know nothing.'

'Ma chère Anna, tu es méchante,' said Cavagnac, smiling; 'but I wish his Creole blood would make him mad enough to commit suicide. Adieu, mon enfant. Come to me as soon as possible.'

'Oui, Monsieur, certainement.'

The Count walked rapidly away, the

Provençale re-crossed the road, and entered Mrs Harper's shop.

'Madame, I want to see Mademoiselle,—the lady who lodges here, s'il vous plait.'

Mrs Harper looked at the stranger, puzzled by the contradiction of her dress and appearance, but her being a foreigner matched with her lodger's story.

'Well,' she said, 'Madmosel de Valère told me she would see no one,—that she knew no one in England.'

'But I have just arrived here, and she will see me if Madame will kindly show me the way up-stairs, and tell her that her model must see her.'

Mrs Harper called a servant girl and bade her take the young person up to the French lady.

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sympathy soothed and calmed more than words.

At last she lifted her face.

'Anna, how did you find me? Do you know all that has passed?'

'Sì, Signora; all. I tracked you step by step. O Mademoiselle, if you only knew the suffering your flight has caused! I do not speak of M. Casper, or Madame his mother, but your friends,—M. et Madame Falconbridge.'

'I can't help it,' said Nina hurriedly. 'If I go back, Aunt Georgine will take me. I am under age, and Casper—Anna, I can't bear it; it would kill me by inches. Are they seeking me still?'

'Yes; M. Casper has placed it in F—'s hands.'

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case you or she need it. I leave all to you, trust all to you.'

'Merci mille fois, will Monsieur wait here?'

'No; all is safe in your hands. I will go to the Maestro, and report our success.'

'Et la pauvre Madame Falconbridge?'

'No; not till I see or hear from you.'

'Eh bien, and M. Casper shall know nothing.'

'Ma chère Anna, tu es méchante,' said Cavagnac, smiling; 'but I wish his Creole blood would make him mad enough to commit suicide. Adieu, mon enfant. Come to me as soon as possible.'

'Oui, Monsieur, certainement.'

The Count walked rapidly away, the

Provençale re-crossed the road, and entered Mrs Harper's shop.

'Madame, I want to see Mademoiselle, —the lady who lodges here, s'il vous plait.'

Mrs Harper looked at the stranger, puzzled by the contradiction of her dress and appearance, but her being a foreigner matched with her lodger's story.

'Well,' she said, 'Madmosel de Valère told me she would see no one,—that she knew no one in England.'

'But I have just arrived here, and she will see me if Madame will kindly show me the way up-stairs, and tell her that her model must see her.'

Mrs Harper called a servant girl and bade her take the young person up to the French lady.

Anna-Marie followed her closely, and as the girl reached the room-door, she put her quietly aside, saying,—'Merci,—I will not trouble you further,' and entered the apartment.

There sat Nina Lennox, her head resting on her hands, her eyes fixed on a book, no word of which they saw, so changed, that Anna paused, startled. Nina turned sharply, and sprang to her feet with a low cry. But the Provençale clasped her hands.

'O Mademoiselle, que vous êtes malheureuse!'

Nina hid her face on Anna's shoulder and burst into tears for the first time since the day she fled, and the Provençale let her weep. Her soft touch and silent

sympathy soothed and calmed more than words.

At last she lifted her face.

'Anna, how did you find me? Do you know all that has passed?'

'Sì, Signora; all. I tracked you step by step. O Mademoiselle, if you only knew the suffering your flight has caused! I do not speak of M. Casper, or Madame his mother, but your friends,—M. et Madame Falconbridge.'

'I can't help it,' said Nina hurriedly. 'If I go back, Aunt Georgine will take me. I am under age, and Casper—Anna, I can't bear it; it would kill me by inches. Are they seeking me still?'

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a lady, very young, rather tall, and of distinguished appearance, wearing a dark gray silk bonnet, and thick black lace veil, a black moire-antique dress, and very handsome India shawl; wearing also a gold watch, long chain, and gold cross hanging to it, and she carried a black travelling bag? Her voice, too, was peculiarly soft and musical.'

The description tallied exactly.

'Yes, sir; I did see and notice such a lady, but she did not take a ticket, only changed two £5 notes, and went out that way again.'

'She said nothing, I suppose, about her route?'

'Oh no, sir; not a word, only that she wasn't going down the line.'

'Thank you.' He turned away, and said in Italian to Anna-Marie, 'I thought so; she is in London, and now to trace her.'

'Comment, Monsieur? it would be easier in Paris, but here chacun s'occupe de ses affaires, and every one is so horribly free—n'est ce pas?'

'Tant mieux, n'est ce pas?' retorted Cavagnac, half-laughing, as they went out. 'We must ask the policemen who were on duty at the time in the neighbourhood, all the tramps, and itinerant venders, et cetera; any one likely or unlikely to have noticed her. Some of the little Arabs may have offered to carry her bag. So now we part company, and meet here in an hour and a half.' They se-

parated, to pursue their weary and certainly somewhat hopeless work—to Anna entirely fruitless. She met Cavagnac at the rendezvous with a white, weary face, almost with tears of vexation in her dark eyes.

'No news, Anna?'

'No, Monsieur.'

'I have. She asked a policeman the shortest way to St Paul's, so there we must go.'

Again he called a cab, and they were driven to St Paul's Churchyard, where they got out.

'By the Mass!' said the Count, half-laughing, 'it is the strangest chase I ever had.'

'Que faire?' said the child, looking

up in his face. 'Monsieur is at fault.'

'Not I, car' amica mia. She walked here, and by the time she reached the spot her excitement will have given place to faintness or dizziness, and she will have entered the first confectioner's or baker's that she saw. There are not many all down Ludgate Hill and Fleet-street, so we can beat them all,—I this side, you on the other; we can signal each other. Allez donc, petite.'

She obeyed, and crossed to the other side, that on which, further down, Mrs Harper's shop was situated. Each went unsuccessfully into two or three, and Anna was close to Mrs Harper's, when, looking across for her companion, she saw him stop and beckon to her.

The girl crossed the road directly, in spite of the crowd of vehicles, and gained his side. He drew her under one of the many archways leading into courts with which Ludgate Hill abounds.

'You were going to try that shop, were you not, Anna?'

'Yes.'

'Right; you would have found her. As I paused, my eye scanned the houses, and at a window on the second floor I caught a glimpse of a face that I am positive was hers. She is there; but for her sake in every way, only you must appear. Tell her, at present, that you alone have tracked her, and try to make her go to Lady Falconbridge. Here is money, in

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'Yes; M. Casper has placed it in F—'s hands.'

Nina turned, and paced to and fro.

'What shall I do? where shall I fly? He can track me down if you could. What made *you* do it, child?' she said, suddenly stopping.

'Mademoiselle has been kind to me, and my heart is grateful to her. I knew that when her money was gone she would suffer. I am used to struggle, and knew well, better than her, the difficulties and dangers which surround a beautiful and delicately bred woman, cast suddenly adrift, and I searched till I found her. Oh, Signora mia, go back to your best friends who love you! The Lady Theodora will not give you up.'

'Impossible! I cannot. Anna, Eng-

lish law will give me up. You do not know it.'

'Mais, Mademoiselle, pardonnez moi. M. Falconbridge told me that Madame Wolfgang could not reclaim you till she went to some court of laws.'

'But she will succeed; she will go there, voyez vous, chère Anna. I know her. She will—no, I cannot return. I must leave here directly; *you* will not betray me. Go, go, child; I shall come to no harm.'

'Mademoiselle will not return to her friends? Eh bien, you are alone and friendless; so am I. I swear I will not lose sight of you; if you insist, I must go, but you will not escape my vigilance. If you will leave this—'

'I must. I dare not stop.'

'Then, Mademoiselle, come with me; deign to accept the shelter of my lodging. Humble as it is, you will be safer there, and will not be alone; to wait on you and serve you will be a pleasure to the poor cameo-seller.'

'Anna, serve me! you are my equal in every way *now*.'

The cameo-seller shook her head sadly. Equal! no, Nina had friends, and the faithful love of a noble heart; but she had no friends, no one to love her, no one she dared to love.

'Mademoiselle will honour me by coming, then?' was all the patient lips uttered.

Nina, affectionate and impulsive as a

parated, to pursue their weary and certainly somewhat hopeless work—to Anna entirely fruitless. She met Cavagnac at the rendezvous with a white, weary face, almost with tears of vexation in her dark eyes.

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de-Marie, 'I must go for Corsare and my cameo-box. I left them with an artist, to whom I sat this morning.'

Anna de Laval, it will be seen, considered that the end sanctifies the means; and so she said to herself, as she made her way to B—— street, where she found, not only Cavagnac, but the sculptor.

'Doubly welcome, Anna mia,' he said; 'we knew you would come to-night. Where is Miss Lennox?'

'Signori miei, you must keep her secret until I have her leave to go further. I have your word?'

'Yes.'

'The Signora is at this moment in my lodging.' And Anna reported faithfully what had passed.

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'All pursuit after Miss Lennox is useless, as she is beyond it. Her friends may be easy about her, as she is staying with a faithful friend, who hopes soon to persuade her to seek your protection.'

This she enclosed, addressed, and delivered to Stewart; then slung her box, took her dog, and went away.

END OF VOL. II.

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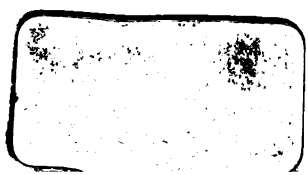
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